
A JESUIT AT THE ENGLISH COURT

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WESTMONASTERII,
Die 20 Martii, 1922.



CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, S.J.
1641-1682

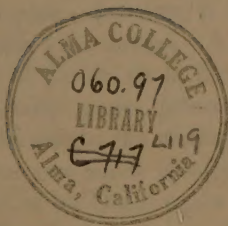
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A JESUIT AT THE ENGLISH COURT

The Life of the Venerable Claude de la Colombière, S. J.

By SISTER MARY PHILIP, of the Bar Convent, York

With a Preface by the REV. G. BLISS, S. J.



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To
THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS,
SOURCE OF LIFE AND HOLINESS.

PREFACE

NOW that the Church has declared a Saint the humble Sister of the Visitation, to whom we owe under God the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with all that it has accomplished, it is natural that our thoughts and desires should turn towards the canonization of the Ven. Claude de la Colombière, her director and her one stay and comfort in the time of her darkest trial, when no one else believed in her or her Divine mission.

Between these two souls there were certain essential things in common. Each had a certain simplicity of character, each had an unusually courageous spirit, and in each there was (a natural consequence of such qualities) an astonishing power of concentration of purpose. Sanctity, it is true, is an affair of grace; but grace builds upon nature. A short way to learn much of the character of Claude de la Colombière is to read and ponder the remarkable pages printed in Chapter VII of this book, in which he weighs the motives and considers the difficulties of the famous vow which he took to observe all the rules, greater and lesser, of his Order under pain of mortal sin. It is true, as said by Père Pomplard regarding this document and the rest of the notes made during the same time of retreat, that it is impossible to read them without saying to oneself "These are the words of a Saint," and this, I think, is because they show a singleness and intensity of purpose united to a balance and calmness of will. There are many outside the Church, there may even be still a few Catholics, who regard the devotion to the Sacred Heart as having about it a certain

savour of sentimentalism. This, however, is a quality notably absent from the characters of both the first propagators of the devotion as we know it to-day.

We must hope, then, that the publication of this life will be a step towards that solemn recognition of the heroic sanctity of Claude de la Colombière which will be the last seal upon the Church's approval of a devotion which is still in a sense new, though it has its roots in the very soil of Calvary. That we in this country have a special claim to share in the privilege of helping to bring about this consummation is evident.

Father de la Colombière brought the devotion straight to England from its cradle at Paray-le-Monial. He taught it here before it had been preached even in France. And our forefathers, exhausted by a century of persecution and upon the eve of a fresh outbreak of oppression, found in his teaching the comfort and the strength which they needed. He was an exile in this land and he was banished from it with contumely, but he bore testimony, soon after his return to France, to the strong faith and deep religious devotion of many souls in England, not only among Catholics but also among their separated brethren. Despite the progress of rationalism this religious sense still persists, in however bewildered forms, in the majority of our countrymen. Doubtless it makes its appeal still to the Apostle of the Sacred Heart in Heaven as it did when he was upon earth.

When Claude de la Colombière's name can be pronounced by the priest at the altar we shall have a new and powerful intercessor for the conversion of England.

G. BLISS, S.J.

February 15, 1922.

PREFATORY NOTE

THE facts of this Life have been taken from the exhaustive French biography by Père Charrier, S.J., a copy of which book was kindly lent to the writer by Mrs. Hungerford Allen, but the work is in no sense a translation.

Much gratitude is due to Father Keating, S.J., without whose help the manuscript would never have been published. He put the writer in touch with the Postulator of the Cause, the Rev. Père Zelle, S.J., who, up to the time of his sudden death on Maundy Thursday last, was in correspondence with her and gave her much encouragement.

ST. MARY'S CONVENT,
YORK.

*Feast of the Immaculate Conception,
December 8th, 1921.*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. CHILDHOOD: 1641-1650	1
II. EDUCATION AND VOCATION: 1650-1658	8
III. AVIGNON: 1658-1666	12
IV. PARIS: 1666-1670	19
V. A SAINT IN THE MAKING	27
VI. LYONS: 1670-1674	35
VII. TERTIANSHIP: 1674-1675	42
VIII. PARAY-LE-MONIAL: 1675	51
IX. ST. MARGARET MARY: 1675-1676	58
X. IN THE WAYS OF GOD: 1675-1676	63
XI. THE CHOICE OF AN APOSTLE: 1675-1676	69
XII. APOSTOLIC WORK IN PARAY: 1675-1676	76
XIII. A DIRECTOR OF SOULS	82
XIV. EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS AND SERMONS	94
XV. ENGLAND: 1660-1676	102
XVI. A JESUIT AT THE ENGLISH COURT: 1676-1678	108
XVII. PROGRESS IN PERFECTION	114
XVIII. DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART IN ENGLAND	128
XIX. APOSTOLIC WORK IN LONDON: 1676-1678	137
XX. PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE	154
XXI. LETTERS TO ST. MARGARET MARY AND MÈRE DE SAUMAISE	159
XXII. THE KING AND THE JESUIT	166
XXIII. ARREST—IMPRISONMENT—BANISHMENT: 1678-1679	170
XXIV. TOWARDS EVENING: 1679-1680	189
XXV. GOLD IN THE FURNACE: 1680-1681	202
XXVI. "WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT": 1682	209
XXVII. TWO HUNDRED YEARS AND MORE	217
XXVIII. TO-DAY	226
APPENDIX: HIS SPIRITUAL RETREAT	232

A JESUIT AT THE ENGLISH COURT

*The Life of the Venerable Claude
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CHAPTER I

Childhood: 1641—1650

ST. MARGARET MARY: "Give me, Lord Jesus, the means to do that which Thou dost command."

JESUS CHRIST: "Go to My servant, Father de la Colombière, and tell him from Me to do all he can to establish this devotion, and thus to console My Heart."

ON May 13th, Feast of Our Lord's Ascension, 1920, the Church set the seal of canonization on the servant and disciple of the Sacred Heart, Margaret Mary Alacoque, and we are told by supreme authority to honour her as a Saint.

Simultaneously throughout the Catholic world a revival of devotion to the Divine Heart has taken place. Notably was this the case in England, during the summer and autumn following the feast of the canonization. Throughout the length and breadth of England and Scotland the message was carried, and the tiny seed sown in England between 1676 and 1679 broke forth into blossom which bears promise of an abundant harvest. In 1675 St. Margaret Mary made known to her friend and confessor, Father Claude de la Colombière, all the treasure of love and blessing which had been revealed to her by the Sacred Heart. "Go to My servant, Father Claude de la Colombière," said Our Lord; the nun obeyed,

and the young Jesuit took up her words and carried them as a message from the King of kings to the English Court.

Two hundred and forty years later, on October 17th, 1920, the great Cathedral of Westminster was packed. "Not only was every seat occupied, but every aisle and chapel thronged with a standing multitude" (see *Universe*, October 22nd, 1920); even the galleries were full, and they are seldom thrown open to the public. The message was the same as that preached by the Jesuit in 1676—the love of the Heart of Christ! Once again a foreigner to our land brought us the sweet tidings, and "despite his broken English, Father Matheo Crawley Boevey poured forth in burning eloquence the glories of the Sacred Heart. It was the first feast-day of the humble religious of Paray as a canonized Saint of the Church, and we saw that day some of the fruits of her hidden life of intimacy with Our Lord, and of the labours which her influence inspired Father Claude de la Colombière to accomplish in London."

The hearts of English Catholics burned that day with desire to spread the crusade of love, inaugurated by the preacher and called the "Social Reign of the Sacred Heart." It is a tremendous work, to win this Protestant England home by home, and lay it at the Feet of the King of Love, and we are tempted to cry out with St. Margaret Mary: "Lord! give us the means to do that which Thou dost command." Perhaps He would say to us as He said to her: "Go to My servant, Father de la Colombière." It is certain the French Jesuit has a special claim upon us. We owe him both gratitude and reparation—gratitude for the message he brought us, reparation for the fact that the English nation first cast him into prison and then passed sentence of exile upon him! But now he is little known, so whilst the claims of the Sacred Heart are pressing upon us from all sides, and our attention has been drawn by the Church to his friend and co-worker St. Margaret Mary, it seems a fitting time to tell his story once again—that story which is especially full of interest to all English Catholics and lovers of the Heart of Christ.

Claude de la Colombière was the third of seven children born to Bertrand de la Colombière and Margaret Coindat,

his wife. The de la Colombière family was of noble Burgundian origin, and its members had established themselves in Dauphiny about 1360. They bore on a shield azure three doves argent, in chief, beaked and clawed, gules. For the next two hundred years it is difficult to follow the fortunes of the family, but towards the close of the sixteenth century it was represented by one Pierre de la Colombière, who held the office of public notary in St. Symphorien.

St. Symphorien d'Ozon lies about midway between Lyons and Vienne. It is a small town surrounded by beautiful hills and watered by the River Ozon. The climate is mild and healthy, and the place attractive from many points of view, natural as well as spiritual. Here the Catholic Faith has long burnt brightly, for religion holds the first place in the hearts of its inhabitants.

In the peaceful days which followed the religious wars of the latter half of the sixteenth century St. Symphorien extended itself across the valley and along the high-road which runs from Lyons to Vienne. The industry of the people soon obliterated the ravages of war, and the town became famous for its commerce and continued to be one of the strongholds of religion in France.

Pierre de la Colombière was the paternal grandfather of Claude. He was twice married. After the death of his first wife, by whom he had three sons, he married, several years later, Anne Truffin, who bore three children—Bertrand, Jacques, and Catherine. Of Jacques we have no trace except the entry of his baptism in 1609. Catherine married Odet de Mignon. There has been a good deal of dispute as to whether or not the family de la Colombière belonged to the nobility at this time or not. The probabilities are that, owing to their following the profession of royal notary, they were not considered of noble rank. But it seems clear that Pierre de la Colombière was anxious to lay claim to nobility; he married his daughter Catherine to Odet de Mignon, who was certainly of noble rank, and we find Humbert his grandson and the brother of Claude laying claim later on to the privileges of the nobles. We shall see the higher nobility of Claude in desiring to

renounce all worldly dignity that he might be more like to Christ, who became poor and of no account for love of us.

Pierre de la Colombière, Claude's grandfather, died on September 8th, 1624. Bertrand succeeded his father as royal notary, and soon made a career for himself. The young man prospered as his father had done before him, and soon made up his mind to take a larger house than the one in which he was then living, in view, no doubt, of shortly settling down in life. It was not, however, until the end of the year 1633 that Bertrand married. His choice fell on the niece of an old family friend, a girl of considerable fortune, and dowered, moreover, with gifts both of nature and of grace. She was known as the "virtuous Margaret Coindat," and in her a natural dignity of bearing was combined with easy and graceful manners. She was both gentle and resolute, and well fitted to become the mother of the seven children which blessed her marriage with Bertrand.

Humbert, Isabeau, Claude, René, Floris, Marguerite, and Joseph came in turn to gladden the hearts of the devoted pair, but Isabeau and René were not long left to their parents. God took them to Himself in early childhood, leaving the five others to be an unfailing source of comfort and joy in the family. Humbert became eventually a Judge in the Criminal Court of Vienne, and afterwards Master of Inland Revenues at Grenoble. We shall meet him again in the course of this biography, and find him always such as a contemporary speaks of him: "A simple and upright man, one who lived in the world a life of the cloister."

Floris was born on December 3rd, 1645. He became Arch-deacon of Vienne, sacrificing his desire to become a missionary, and died in 1712. He enters very little into the biography of Claude.

The youngest of the family, Joseph, also became a priest. Claude urged him to make the exercises of St. Ignatius, which he did with the result that he found his vocation was to carry the tidings of the Gospel to Canada. He spent a most zealous missionary life, and when, in 1691, the needs of his mission recalled him to France, we find that he officiated at the marriage of Humbert's son. Fifteen years later an official paper to which

his name is subscribed tells us that he had been chosen for posts of trust: "Messire Joseph de la Colombière, priest, Vicar-General of the diocese of Quebec, Archdeacon and member of the Supreme Council of that city."

Of Marguerite, the only daughter, we shall have more to say later. She was devoted to her brothers, especially perhaps to Claude; but Humbert was a frequent visitor at the Convent at Condrien, where after many trials Marguerite finally settled in 1674.

Four months after the death of her little daughter, Isabeau, Madame de la Colombière gave birth to her third child. Claude was born on February 2nd, Feast of the Purification of Our Blessed Lady. He was baptized a few hours after his birth, but did not receive the ceremonies of that great Sacrament until later. By some accident the original entry in the baptismal register seems to have been destroyed, the discrepancies being afterwards filled up from the rather imperfect memory of the parish priest, who was well advanced in years. The names of the godparents are given, but not the date of the ceremony. Careful examination of the registers, however, proves that it must have taken place between April 8th, 1641, and the month of October, 1642. Claude's godfather was "Claude II. de Mangiron, Count of Montleons, Lord of Ampius and Igis, Baron of Monbellet and other places, and Lieutenant-General of His Majesty's Army"; his godmother was the "very noble lady Anne-Louise Coste, wife of Monsieur Jacques Putod." The godfather has served his country with much distinction and often resided at his château of la Roche, close to St. Symphorien. He was an intimate friend of Bertrand de la Colombière, and readily consented to stand as sponsor for his little son.

Monsieur and Madame de la Colombière were excellent Catholics, and brought up their children in all the grand traditions of the Faith. Bertrand made public profession of having the honour of being a member of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. He established foundations for chapels and Masses both at Simandies and St. Symphorien, and often used his influence in the religious interest of his native town.

When Claude was nine years old the family moved to Vienne, keeping their house at St. Symphorien as a country residence, and in some old documents concerning the family we read that "Monsieur de la Colombière was held in great esteem in Vienne, more even on account of his personal character than on account of his munificent benefactions." Together the parents set themselves to train the future disciple of the Sacred Heart. A large share fell to the mother, as Bertrand was much occupied by his public duties: nevertheless, he kept for himself the care of his son's mental training, which he began at a very early age. Humbert, the eldest son, had been put under the care of a master at the age of six. Marguerite Coindat was an almost perfect mother, worthy to take her place with Blanche of Castile and Aleth, the mothers of St. Louis and St. Bernard.

All the five children led exemplary lives. Claude was the first to win his crown. Humbert and Floris survived him for thirty years, Joseph for forty, and Marguerite for fifty-two years. It is much to be regretted that so few facts have come down to us of the early years of Claude and his brothers and sister. Their home must have been very happy and holy, for the after careers of the children speak clearly of their early Catholic training, and of the bright examples of virtue held up to them by their parents. The home circle, then, was a peaceful one. The only domestic events of which we have historical proof during the first ten years of Claude's life were the birth and baptism of René in 1643, followed in four days by the child's death; the birth and baptism of Floris in 1645; and in October, 1648, the advent of a little sister, to be followed in 1651 by the birth of the youngest child, Joseph.

Public events, however, were not of so peaceful a nature. From the age of five, Claude had the spectacle of war kept before his eyes. The bridge of St. Symphorien, which spanned the River Ozon, gave way in 1646, although it had been repaired but a very short time previously—the reason was clear: "Large numbers of soldiers, going and coming from Catalonia, passed St. Symphorien, taking with them the heavy apparatus of war." Chariots, horses, and soldiers all had to pass over the river, so it is little wonder that the bridge gave way. One

can imagine the impressionable boy of five, looking with the large-eyed wonder, common to boys of all nations, at the cavalcades and feeling the martial spirit stirred within him even at that early age. Although the inhabitants of St. Symphorien would have nothing to do with the Huguenot ministers, those pretended reformers who had become masters of the neighbouring town of Vienne, still the town had suffered grievously from a material point of view. There were many chapels in which no services were held, and which were allowed to fall into a shocking state of disrepair. The roof of the principal church gave way, and the dilapidation was so great that the Town Council was summoned to a meeting, at which the Mayor spoke these memorable words: "It is shameful and odious to see the House of God in such a state; when it rains there is no part of it in which one can shelter. I call upon you for the last time to restore the Church promptly, so that it may not be utterly ruined." It was Bertrand de la Colombière who had been the chief instigator of this movement; and later on his efforts were crowned with success, for the church at St. Symphorien became one of the "best and most richly ornamented in the diocese of Lyons." This, however, was not till Claude had left the years of his childhood behind him. For the first years of his life, his piety grew and ripened without the aid of the external beauty of altar and church, and without the splendour and pomp of liturgical ceremonies. But the boy was naturally of a thoughtful and pious disposition, which grew and developed in the sunshine of a mother's love. There was something almost symbolic of his future life as Apostle of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus in the rural scenes which surrounded his father's house. Before him rose a hill which was covered with cornfields and vineyards, to the right the winepress where they trod the grapes, to the left the sheepfold belonging to his father's farm. Often in after years, when toiling to bring back souls to the Good Shepherd in the busy city of London, Claude must have looked back to the years of his childhood and seen with the clear-sightedness of mature years that his very surroundings were tokens of his special call to the apostolic life.

CHAPTER II

Education and Vocation: 1650—1658

“Happy those who, mindful of their baptismal vow, begin in their youth to bear themselves as the faithful soldiers of Christ and manfully to fight under His banner.”—R. HASSEY.

EARLY in 1650 Bertrand de la Colombière retired from his position as royal notary and went to live at Vienne, retaining his house at St. Symphorien as a country residence. The education of his son was soon to begin in earnest, but for six months more Claude did not leave his parents. They lived in the parish of St.-Andri-le-Bas, and attended the abbatial church where, in 1311, Clement V., in presence of the Fathers of the Council of Vienne, had for the first time solemnly celebrated the Feast of Corpus Christi. Here the services were magnificently carried out, and Claude saw for the first time the beauty and pomp of the Church's liturgy. Whether he had a tutor for six months, or whether he went daily to the Jesuit College situated on the top of a steep hill, is not known, but there are indications of his being somewhat delicate and timid, and more likely, therefore, to have spent the time entirely under his father's roof. The interval was of no great duration, for it is certain that in October, 1650, he entered the Junior College of Notre Dame du Bon Secours at Lyons, which was built on the side of the hill known as Mount Fourvières. About ten years before this time the people of Lyons had publicly placed themselves under the protection of the Queen of Heaven. The sanctuary known as Our Lady of Fourvières soon became famous, and has remained so to this day. Claude, then, was for the second time brought especially under the protection of Mary. Twenty years later he was asked to preach in the church at the top of the hill. It was the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and some of the preacher's words have come down to us. The sermon was on the scapular, and he addressed the city in these words: “O Lyons, more blessed in the possession of this

treasure than in the wealth of merchandise enclosed within your walls, do you ever sufficiently appreciate the generous love which has associated you in all the privileges and prerogatives of the Order of Mount Carmel? But for the protection of Mary, how many listening to me at this hour might have fallen victims to the sword, to perils of water, to perils of fire! How many owe her more than life—even the salvation of their souls.”

All the pupils at the Junior College were externs. Claude lived, probably, with one of his uncles, or with friends of the family—not far away. This Junior College had been established for the younger boys to attend before entering Trinity College, on the other side of the Saône. At that time there was only one bridge crossing the river at Lyons, and the traffic was so great that it was a real drawback for children. The Jesuits, recognizing the danger, opened Notre Dame du Bon Secours. Twenty religious formed the staff, but the College was maintained with great difficulty, and Louis XIV., recognizing the sacrifices the Jesuits were making on behalf of the education of the young, granted them in 1652 the privilege of being exempt from all rents and taxes—“in consideration,” runs the document, “of the great fruit reaped by the Junior College in the city of Lyons, both by the education of the children, and by other exercises of piety and devotion of which he [the King] is perfectly well informed.”

It is uncertain where and in what year Claude made his First Communion and received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Both these Sacraments were usually received at about the age of nine years in the Diocese of Vienne, and it is more than probable that Claude was prepared at home in 1650 for these two great events, as Bertrand de la Colombière and his holy wife Marguerite would certainly not have deprived any child of theirs of the grace of the Sacraments if it were possible to procure fitting preparation for them, and we have documents to prove that the younger boy, Joseph, was confirmed at the age of seven and a half years.

Claude spent three years at the Junior College, and passed on at the age of twelve and a half to Trinity College. This was

in October, 1653. He had gone through his grammar classes with great success, and had laid a solid foundation for the studies he was now to begin. He spent one year in humanities, two in rhetoric, and two in philosophy. Trinity College was at that time the glory of Lyons. Nearly all the distinguished people who passed through the town made a point of visiting the College, and it was known far and wide as a centre of education where enthusiasm for literature and art was combined with a truly Christian spirit. Here Claude gave himself up to the study of literature, science, and philosophy. The headmaster was at that time Père Gibalin, a writer of some note. Two years later, in 1655, he was succeeded by Père Pierre Labbe, whose name has come down to us on a list of celebrated masters. At this time, also, Claude made friends, without knowing it, with his future Novice Master, in the person of Père Jean Papon, the prefect of the literature classes. The well-known Père de la Chaise, the future chaplain to Louis XIV., was also employed in the College. Claude was a brilliant student. His masters bestowed the highest praise upon him for his success both in literature and philosophy. Indeed, the young man seems to have been singularly gifted from an intellectual point of view. The holidays which broke the monotony of his college days were spent at St. Symphorien. There they passed too rapidly for all concerned. Bertrand and Marguerite de la Colombière found the days all too short for them to enjoy Claude's society. He was devoted to his eldest brother, Humbert, who had already begun his public career, while his affection towards Floris, Marguerite, and Joseph was shown in a hundred ways. So passed the years from 1654 to September, 1658. Claude was only in his eighteenth year when, having completed his studies, he left Trinity College and returned home, his education completed.

The home circle received him joyfully, hoping to keep him amongst them for a longer period than had yet been possible. But Claude's mind was already made up. He had weighed this world with the next, and had resolved to give up all and follow Christ.

Some have affirmed that Monsieur de la Colombière opposed

his son's choice of the religious life, but facts prove that if indeed he demurred, he certainly did not oppose him for any length of time. Only seven weeks elapsed between Claude's return home from college and his entry into the noviciate of the Society of Jesus at Avignon on October 25th, 1658.*

Claude's father, then, did not oppose his son. But the devil opposed him with all his might. From all we can gather from the scanty information left to us of Claude at this time, it seems that he was delicate and highly strung. The hardships of religious life probably seemed at times as though they would be insurmountable, and he needed all his courage to brace himself up to take the steps of leaving his parents and all the comforts of his home life. Years later, in looking back on these days, he wrote: "I had a most horrible aversion to the religious life when I entered the noviceship." And preaching for the clothing of a nun, he enumerated the sacrifices one has to make in entering religion, and then added: "It is not, then, from despair or disappointment, still less from force, that you have chosen this path; it must, then, be from a motive of virtue and of the love of God." And, again, he addresses his sister: "What a shame it would be to live a tepid life in religion after having sacrificed so much and made such noble efforts."

But the generosity of Christ triumphed over the natural weakness of His servant. He left St. Symphorien on October 23rd in the company of his father. At Condrien they were joined by Jean Lagaste, a friend of Claude's and his future fellow-novice. Two days later Monsieur de la Colombière left his son at the Jesuit House at Avignon, and Claude began his religious life.

* Two documents give the date of Claude's admission to the noviciate as October 22nd, 1659, but this is quite evidently a mistake which began in 1675. The noviceship catalogue for the year 1658-1659 includes Claude's name among the list of novices present that year, and the last novice inscribed *after* Claude is entered on December 18th, 1658. Twenty-three other catalogues confirm this date. Besides, the young religious made his first vows on October 26th, 1660, and this he could not do until he had had two full years of noviceship. Therefore, the date October 25th, 1658, is the historically corrected date of Claude's entry into the noviciate of the Company of Jesus.

CHAPTER III

Avignon : 1658—1666

“ Believe me, it is neither seclusion nor long prayers which make Saints, but the sacrifice of our own will even in the holiest of things, and an inviolable attachment to God’s Will, which is made known to us by our Superiors.”—*Letter of Ven. Claude de la Colombière.*

THE Jesuits possessed two houses at this time in the City of the Popes—the College, and the Noviciate House, which was dedicated to St. Louis of France. This house still exists, and is very much the same as it was when Claude de la Colombière entered its doors to begin his religious training. A noviceship is not a school for the perfect, but a school of perfection—a very different thing. Nevertheless, the novices at Avignon seem to have been particularly fervent at this time and for many a long year after Claude had left its sheltering walls. Archbishop Bordini, in giving an account of his diocese to the Pope, wrote: “ In the noviceship of St. Louis are to be found learned and noble young men whose holiness and manner of living are such, that if your Holiness could but see them, you would think they were so many angels.” Even allowing for the flowery language of the seventeenth century, this is high praise. Seventy years later, in a letter dated May 19th, 1731, and written by a Monsieur Dugas to Monsieur Bottu de la Barmondière, we find the following anecdote, which goes to prove that St. Louis was, at that time, still a school of perfection with its fervour maintained at a high pitch: “ I must tell you something which Father Provincial [Father Jean Croiset, S.J.] told me lately. During his visit to Avignon, the Bishop of Nîmes visited the noviciate. After having been shown the grounds, he expressed a desire to see the interior of the house, and especially the rooms occupied by the Novices. It was the hour for saying the Rosary. Four Novices shared the room. The Bishop entered; each Novice was at his prie-Dieu engaged in prayer. The Provincial in-

formed them that the Bishop of Nîmes had come to see them. Not a Novice moved or turned his head. The Bishop turned in astonishment and admiration to the Provincial, and asked to be shown another room. They entered—again the Novices were at prayer—and the same thing exactly took place. Tears came into the Bishop's eyes, and he said to the Provincial: 'I am not in the least surprised that God makes use of your Society to advance His work for souls.' The Provincial confessed that this episode filled him with joy."

Claude found that his new home amongst the Jesuits was one of the finest of the French Province at the time. It was a large building in the best taste. The gardens were spacious and well kept. The church, which had been completed in 1620, was very beautiful, and resplendent with marble and gold. The paintings also were most valuable. In 1658 there were forty-nine novices. This was considered a small number, and was thought to be due to the disturbed state of Avignon from civil discord during the previous six or seven years.

The Novice Master was Père Jean Papon, a most exemplary religious who had been employed in the government of several of the Colleges, and who has left behind him a reputation of extreme fidelity to duty in the discharge of whatever office was entrusted to him by his Superiors. Père Papon was a man of sound judgment, and he soon found that Claude was anxious to aim at what is highest and best in the service of Christ. In this arduous task the Novice Master determined to spare nothing which would help the soul entrusted to him to attain to the standard of perfection which St. Ignatius puts before his sons. Once, in after days, it seems that Claude de la Colombière referred to his noviceship days, for he speaks of his "strange repugnance" to many of the practices of the religious life. Otherwise no details have come down to us of what must have been two exceptionally fervent years of preparation for taking the vows of religion. But to many of us these words "strange repugnance" will lift the veil and show us once again one of God's Saints in the making. Claude had his defects as well as his virtues. Later on, when we come to know his own heart to the depths, we shall find him bearing witness to the oft-

forgotten fact that Our Lord's words must infallibly come true: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (St. Matt. xi. 12). Among the notes of meditation written after he had left the noviceship we find these words: "At one time I am gay, at another sad: to-day caressing everybody, to-morrow like a hedgehog which pricks if it is touched!" If this was true then—and we have no reason to suppose that it was not—we may surely conclude that in the days of his noviceship Claude must, time after time, have had to reproach himself for failure of a like nature. Many and many a victory he must have gained over his love of ease and comfort, and many more over his tendency to vainglory and love of esteem. There is no fallacy more fatal to the generality of us than that the Saints were cast in a different mould to ourselves, or that the age of Saints is passed. It is not and cannot be so: the Arm of God is not shortened—there is no age without its Saints. All around us are men and women living lives closely united to God—Saints in the making; only our eyes are held and we see not, for the beauty of their souls is hidden from us. Maybe they even try us—thwart us, perhaps, or disagree with us. Sometimes it may happen that their very faults annoy and shock us. Was it not the great St. Teresa who wrote of herself: "The devil sends me so offensive a spirit of bad temper that at times I think I could eat people up" ("Life" 30, 15). One wonders if Claude de la Colombière had read this, and if he drew courage for the conflict with himself from this and like passages from the Lives of the Saints who have fought the good fight and won the crown of justice (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8).

Only one incident of public interest is chronicled in the archives of the Avignon noviciate for the years 1658–1660. This was the visit paid to the house by Louis XIV. The monarch arrived at Avignon on March 19th, 1660, and stayed there until April 1st. Holy Week fell that year between these two dates, and it was edifying to see how Louis gave public profession of his faith by assisting at the different ceremonies in the various churches of the town. On Maundy Thursday he washed the feet of thirteen poor men in the Cathedral.

On Easter Sunday we find him in another church, touching eight hundred persons attacked with the king's evil.*

The next day he went to Mass at the Jesuit Church of St. Louis. Père Papon received him. Whether or not Claude was presented to the King on this occasion seems doubtful, although he was personally acquainted with the Marshal de Villeroy, who was in his suite. Colbert, who was to become the famous Minister, accompanied Cardinal Mazarin on this same occasion. Later on Claude was to become tutor to Colbert's sons, but whether this choice was due to Colbert having met the novice at this time is uncertain.

The two years of noviceship were drawing rapidly to a close, when in September, 1660, Claude was sent to the College at Avignon to study metaphysics and complete his third year of philosophy. It was in this College that on October 25th, 1660, Claude de la Colombière pronounced his first vows. Père Ignace de Beausse was Rector at the time, and Père Jacques Rochette the spiritual Father. Claude was one of a dozen young men who had the privilege of being under the direct influence of Père Jacques Gerard, a religious who afterwards held some of the highest offices in the Society, and who endeared himself to all who knew him by his humility, his meekness, and his charity.

Claude seems to have been particularly blessed by coming under the influence of holy men. In 1626 Père Paul de Barry invited the Visitation nuns to Paray-le-Monial. Now, in 1660, he was spending the evening of his life at Avignon, and it was by him that Claude's soul was prepared for his devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. Claude was present when the old man died; he showed himself to be in death what he had always been in life—perfectly humble, patient, and resigned. One of his sayings was: "Let us be martyrs of love if we cannot be so in act. May divine love consume our hearts, even if the enemies of our faith do not reduce our bodies to ashes." When he had received the Last Sacraments he begged the

* The king's evil is a skin disease supposed to be cured by the touch of the King's hand. St. Edward the Confessor certainly possessed this gift of healing; so also the descendants of St. Louis IX., King of France.

Rector to ask the Fathers to sing a *Te Deum* to thank God for having given him the grace to die in the Society, and he passed away with these words on his lips: *Beneficium beneficiorum mori in Societate*—"O grace of graces, that I should die in the Society."

This death gave Claude a new love for his vocation. Probably, also, it enkindled the first desires of martyrdom in his soul—that desire which was to grow so strong and fervent, to be so nearly fulfilled, and which when it seemed unobtainable drew forth this heartfelt cry: "I was unworthy of such happiness!"

Six days later Claude lost his mother. Madame de la Colombière died the death of a Saint. "On August 3rd, 1661," wrote Bertrand de la Colombière, "my wife died in our house at Saint-Symphorien, and was buried in a vault belonging to us behind the Altar of St. Crèpin. May God receive her soul into His heavenly mansions, where, by His grace, I feel sure she will go, as she has greatly suffered." These words are confirmed by a note written in the death register by the parish priest: "Marguerite de la Colombière, née Coindat, died an excellent Catholic." Some biographers tell us that Claude was present at his mother's death, and that she, struck by his religious demeanour, exclaimed: "My son, you will become a great Saint"; this may be so, but we have no document to vouch for the truth of it. Monsieur de la Colombière makes no mention of Claude having been summoned to his mother's death-bed—rather does it seem to imply that death came unexpectedly in the end, as it so often does after a long illness, and that there was no time to warn the absent members of the family.

His philosophical studies finished, Claude had to take his turn at teaching. The College at Avignon was celebrated in those days, and twelve hundred pupils often attended the classes. Claude began quite humbly with boys in the lowest class, but by the time he left Avignon he was teaching humanities. The Society of Jesus trains its members very slowly, especially, perhaps, those who show great promise. It must have been rather trying for the brilliant philosopher to teach

quite young boys, but Divine Providence had destined Claude to be a model, in more than one office, in that of teaching no less than in that of governing, and Claude was not found wanting. He had Père Gilbert Athiand for his Superior in these first years of teaching. This holy man had bound himself by vow to accept willingly whatever charge was imposed upon him, however humble it might be. Later on we shall meet him again as Master of the Tertiaries, when Claude was completing his religious formation.

Claude at least had one great advantage in these years—he was entrusted each year with a higher class; and so each year master and pupils advanced together, and thus the task of both was considerably lessened, for the master built upon the foundations he had himself laid, and the pupils knew exactly what was expected of them, and grew to love the young religious who worked so whole-heartedly for their advancement.

New troubles seem to have disturbed the peace of Avignon between the years 1662 and 1665, but no disturbance on account of politics interrupted the splendid work of the Jesuit Fathers, both in the College and in their missionary work. Claude de la Colombière learnt from those among whom he lived how to combat heresy and fight for the Cause of God. Seventy Calvinist ministers met in the town to hold a so-called synod. Three Jesuits did all they could to persuade them to hold a public discussion. But not one of them would accept the challenge, although their refusal brought public contempt on themselves and their doctrine. They knew well that they could not hold their own against the loyal sons of St. Ignatius. All round Avignon the Fathers preached sermons and gave missions, thus gaining many souls to God. It is said that in the town itself the sermons preached in Lent and Advent and during the octave of Corpus Christi bore incredible fruit.

Claude had his share in these sermons, although not yet a priest. He possessed a considerable gift of eloquence, even in these early days, and young as he was, he was chosen by his Superiors to preach the last but one of a course of sermons given in Avignon on the occasion of the Canonization of St. Francis of Sales.

This event was magnificently celebrated in the town. The people gave themselves up to unwonted enthusiasm. We must remember that it was at Avignon that the first Convent of the Visitation was established by St. Francis himself. All the most illustrious preachers of the neighbourhood were invited to extol the virtues of the holy Bishop of Geneva. The festivities began on Saturday, May 29th, 1666, and lasted for nine days. On the Saturday of the octave Claude de la Colombière entered the pulpit of the great church at Avignon and poured forth in burning words a rare panegyric of the Saint, taking for his text these words of Samson: *De forti egressa est dulcedo*—"Out of strength came forth sweetness." The young preacher was only twenty-five years of age, but he showed that day that the judgment of those who had chosen him for the task was not misplaced. From this time the young Jesuit's devotion to the gentle St. Francis grew apace. He little dreamt at that time into what close relations he was to be brought with that Saint's most illustrious daughter, St. Margaret Mary; rather were his thoughts entirely taken up with the arduous work of his own perfection. Among his notes at this time we find these words of Father Balthasar Alvarez: "What honour is it to preach if God chooses that I should do so? What is there that is base, in the lowest occupations, if I please God by engaging in them?"

At the end of the scholastic year 1666, Claude had been eight years at Avignon. In spite of himself, he had gained a certain reputation even among men of the world, and his Superiors decided to send him to Paris to begin his theological studies.

CHAPTER IV

Paris: 1666-1670

“It is a strange and unhappy servitude to seek to please men. . . . I find myself elevated above all the kings of earth by the honour which I possess of belonging to God.”—VEN. CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE: *Notes of Retreat*.

IT is highly probable that Claude's summons to Paris by his Superiors in the early autumn of 1666 was due to a wish expressed by the famous Minister of State, Colbert, to have him appointed tutor to his sons. This is not surprising, as Claude was intimately known to the Duke of Villeroy and had the Count de Maugiron for his godfather. If Colbert had not actually named the tutor he desired, it seems more likely that the Jesuits would have chosen an older man; they had plenty of holy and learned men to whom the task might have been entrusted, and it was in the interests of religion that a suitable subject should be chosen to train the sons of so powerful a statesman as Colbert. In any case, it is easy to see the hand of Divine Providence in the choice. Claude was to go to Paris to learn his theology under the best guides, that he might thus be fitted for his future apostolic work. In Paris, too, he was to come face to face with the pestilential errors of Jansenism; he was to learn to know the audacity and malignity of its adherents, that so he might combat it by preaching the all-persuasive love of the Sacred Heart. Again, it was in Paris that he was to meet for the first time with the public humiliation of a disgrace which became for him the starting-point of new progress in virtue, and of a great step forward on the road to perfection.

On account of his duties as tutor, Claude did not live with the other young religious who were studying theology, but with the forty-three members of the Community who had for their Superior Père Etienne de Champs, a formidable enemy of the Jansenists. The College of Clermont (soon afterwards known as the College of Louis-le-Grand) was a huge building.

Four hundred boarders and a thousand externs followed its classes. Colbert's two sons attended the College. The eldest, Jean Baptiste, Marquis de Seignelay, who afterwards became First Lord of the Admiralty, was fifteen years of age, and was about to begin his course of philosophy. His brother Nicholas, three years younger, was still in the lower classes; in after life he became the Archbishop of Rouen.

Claude de la Colombière had to look after these two boys when they were not actually attending the classes of some other professor. Jean Baptiste Colbert was both intelligent and diligent, and proved himself quite a brilliant logician and able after nine months' tuition to hold his own in the debates held in public before the members of the Court in July, 1667. This was a notable event, when one considers the high position which his father held and the favour with which he was regarded. Colbert, although entrusting his sons to the Jesuits for their education, was no friend to the Society, and it was perhaps on this account that the very Reverend Father-General, Père Oliva, took the occasion of Jean Baptiste's great success to write to the Minister and congratulate him on his son's achievement.

Part of this success was due to Claude de la Colombière, and Colbert, recognizing this, "loved him greatly and made much of him." He often invited him to his country house at Sceaux, and there the young religious met all the writers and scientists of the day. Among others might be mentioned Olivier Patru, who had made a great name for himself in the Academy, and who was a great favourite of Colbert. If Claude had been ambitious for worldly advancement, here would have been his chance; he could have used this double friendship, combined with his own exceptional gifts, to raise himself high in the estimation of the world. But, above all and before all, Claude was a true Jesuit; he loved and kept his Rule. He valued the gifts of this world at their true worth, and remembered ever the words of his Father, St. Ignatius: "For as worldly men, who follow the things of the world, love, and with great diligence seek honours, reputation, and the credit of a great name upon earth, as the world teaches them, so those who are advanc-

ing in spirit, and seriously follow Christ our Lord, love and earnestly desire things which are altogether contrary" ("Summary of Constitutions," 11). Patru himself was great enough to admire the unworldliness of his friend. He kept up a correspondence with him for many years, and often referred to him for guidance on points of style and questions of literature, and in all his letters we find marks of his special esteem for the man who, setting aside all that the world could offer him, preferred to clothe himself in the livery of his Lord.

The scholastic year 1667-1668 was perhaps the golden age of the College of Clermont; study was enthusiastically pursued, and the results surpassed any that had been before achieved. Thus did God bless the efforts of the Jesuits just at the very time when the enemies of the Church, the Jansenists especially, were combined to ruin their influence.

At the end of August, 1668, Jean Baptiste Colbert again came off with great honours in the public debates, and again Claude de la Colombière had his share in the triumph, and rose higher still in the esteem of the Minister; but the day was not far off when the words of the Psalmist were to be fulfilled: "Put not your trust in princes" (Ps. cxlv. 2).

We must not lose sight of the fact that during all the time that Claude was acting as tutor to Colbert's sons, he was doing it, as it were, as a work of supererogation. His principal occupation lay in the study of theology, and in the preparation of his own soul for his ordination. That he gave himself heart and soul to these duties cannot be doubted. Each year he had to undergo a rigorous examination in theology, and each time he acquitted himself with honour. Some years later a young religious, about to commence his studies in the same branch, wrote to him for advice. This is the answer he received: "If I had the opportunity of beginning my theological studies again, I should like to give twice as much time to meditation as to reading. It is only in prayer that one can gain insight into spiritual things and know the true worth of the matter under discussion."

With what fervour Claude prepared himself for the priesthood can be best judged by his own admission. A few years

later, when about to make a vow to keep his Rule as perfectly as possible, he writes: "I seem to have been living for some time almost in the way that I shall be bound to do after this vow. It is rather out of the wish to persevere in it than from a desire to do something new and extraordinary that I have entertained this idea." No one who has studied or even read the Rule of St. Ignatius can doubt that that Rule, perfectly kept—as Claude de la Colombière and many others kept it—in itself constitutes sanctity.

It was on April 6th, 1669, at Paris that Claude de la Colombière was ordained priest. He entered at once on his sacerdotal duties. The country house of the College of Clermont was close to the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière, where three thousand poor were cared for. Every Sunday and feast-day in the winter season four of the Fathers were told off to give instructions to, and hear the confessions of, these poor people. In summer many of the religious gave up their half-holiday on Thursday afternoons to go to the hospital for the same good works. Father Claude took his full share of these duties, and says Father Chaurant: "The more he felt himself exposed to the temptation of vainglory, the more generously did he give himself up to the service of these poor people." Vainglory always seems to have been the vulnerable point in the character of Claude de la Colombière. All his life he had to fight against its insidious attacks; even so late as 1677, when making his retreat in London, he notes that he is still subject to "thoughts of ambition and vainglory." How well he combated this weakness is revealed to us in the words which follow this acknowledgment: "It is certain that all the glory of the world, without the knowledge and love of God, would not tempt me."

Within the College, too, Father Claude found scope for his zeal. The spiritual Father of the students, Père Bonhours, was his great friend, and though very much his senior, he often turned to the young priest for counsel. Père Bonhours made Claude his assistant, and so gave him influence over the large number of souls entrusted to his care.

From the shelter of the College Father de la Colombière had ample opportunity of observing the world and its ways before

entering upon his wider apostolate for souls. The scandals which disgraced the Court of Louis XIV. were at their height in 1670. Echoes of Court news filtered into the College in a thousand ways and reached the ears of the young priest. The Duchess de la Villière and Madame de Montespan both lived at the Court. Louis was thus living a scandalously sinful life, and in spite of it he was surrounded by flattering courtiers who encouraged him in his vices and showered upon him honour, glory, and pleasures. An incident in the life of St. Margaret Mary may give us some idea of the King's depravity. Her Superior said to her one day: "Go and kneel before the Blessed Sacrament in place of the King." She went and was immediately attacked with such terrible temptations that it seemed to her she was already in hell. As to Father de la Colombière, we only know that he died on the First Sunday in Lent, 1682, and that the final and complete conversion of Louis XIV. dates from this same Lent! Bourdaloue declares that pride was the source of all the vices of the French Court: "We do not tell the great and powerful that they are gods," he says, "but we tell them they are not like other men, and separate them from the common run of men to such an extent that they forget that they are of the same race and desire to be served as gods." Father de la Colombière's sermons prove clearly that he was quite conversant with the manners of the times. Jansenism was making rapid progress. A conflict was raging between the Church and the State. The latter was trying by all means to restrict the power of the Church and extend its own to its utmost limits. All this was well known to Father de la Colombière. He had sure means of obtaining his information. Colbert still invited him to his house, and the Court news was certainly well known there. As to the affairs of the Church, and above all as to the growth of Jansenism, he had ample opportunity of gathering first-hand knowledge. Bourdaloue stayed at the Jesuit noviciate house in Paris for a whole year together. Fathers Jacques Nouet, Jean Crasset, and Charles Lallemand, to give only the best-known names, were also to be found there, and, above all, the King's Confessor, Père Annat, who did so much towards the overthrow of the heresy.

Jansenism, one of the most pestilential of the heresies which have ever attacked God's Church, taught that Jesus Christ did not die for the whole human race, and therefore it denied the universality of God's love for men. Flattery, promises, and bribery were all employed by the Jansenists to win over to their side students, young priests, religious, and even Bishops. The events which took place at the Convent of Port-Royal show, perhaps, better than anything else the effect of the heresy on the minds of the people. It is said of the Port-Royal nuns that they were "pure as angels and proud as devils." They made little account of any authority either spiritual or temporal. They openly attributed the conduct of the Holy See to weakness, ignorance, and malice. They were full of contempt for other religious Orders and proclaimed loudly that religious life in any other Convent but Port-Royal was a farce. They went so far as to abstain from Holy Communion even at Easter, in defiance of the express law of the Church, under plea of greater reverence. Even the dying were forced to depart this life unfortified by the Bread of Life. They were excommunicated, but they declared that although excommunicated before men, they were certainly not so before God. And yet these women were upheld and flattered by such men as Robert Arnauld, Antoine le Maistre Sainte-Marthe, Racine du Corail, and others. The nuns, forsooth, were upheld by them as "poor victims," and as "of the small number of faithful souls who upheld the Church of God"! Truly it seemed there was no limit to the folly of the Jansenists. For these poor misguided women were remarkable neither for their faith nor their virtue, yet they were called Saints—they made show of austerity and even kept up adoration of the Blessed Sacrament night and day—women who did not even perform their Easter duties, and fed their vanity on the fulsome flattery of those who told them that they were "true Christians—the only true religious in the world, everyone else being corrupt either in faith or morals."

Father de la Colombière was witness of the terrible harm wrought by the Jansenists among Catholics, and especially among some of the religious of the day, and he determined to do all in his power to establish a diametrically opposite course

of conduct in any religious houses with which he had any relations.

It has been said—and it is true—that devotion to the Sacred Heart killed Jansenism. Father de la Colombière was chosen by God to be the Apostle of that devotion, so it was fitting that he should see the havoc wrought in the souls of men by the Jansenistic doctrines, and nowhere could he have learnt this better than at Paris. How surely does Divine Providence “stretch from end to end, mightily ordering all things sweetly” (Antiphon for Advent).

In Paris, then, during the space of four years, Father de la Colombière was prepared for the work of his after life; but there was another preparation wanting still. God loves the workman more even than the work, and it was to perfect the soul of His servant that He sent Claude de la Colombière humiliation and disgrace.

The occasion was a small one. It must have seemed a purely human and trivial oversight which brought it about, and perhaps some would have found it difficult to recognize the finger of God in the occurrence. But not so Father de la Colombière; he knew that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” and he took his humiliation as he had taken his success, and thanked God equally for them both.

Colbert continued his friendly relations with the young Jesuit until, his vanity being wounded, he forgot his debt of gratitude to the tutor of his sons and broke off all communication with him. The Minister had transformed the exterior aspect of Paris by taking measures to ensure great cleanliness in the streets, and he had provided for the safety of the people by ordering the street lanterns to be kept lighted all night. The public gratitude was, in accordance with the custom of the times, expressed in the most laudatory rhymes and couplets. But some of these literary effusions were somewhat satirical, as the new improvements had necessitated new taxes. One of these poems was found among the papers of Father de la Colombière. Colbert had invited him to Sceaux, and one day, during the Jesuit's visit to the Minister, Colbert entered Father de la Colombière's room. The occupant was out and had left his

papers open on the table. Colbert was tempted to look at them, and his eyes fell on the following couplet:

“Colbert est sorti de la boue.
Il craint encore d’y retomber.”

The Minister’s vanity was wounded, and he straightway petitioned the Provincial to send Father de la Colombière out of the Province. This was in the summer of 1650. The Jesuits were obliged to yield to Colbert’s importunity, and thus the designs of Providence were accomplished, and Father de la Colombière, disgraced in the eyes of the Parisian world, was sent to Lyons, where his preparation for his life’s work was completed.

CHAPTER V

A Saint in the Making

"It is strange how many enemies have to be faced from the moment that we resolve to become Saints."—VEN. CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

IT will be consoling as well as most interesting to lift, for a while, the veil which surrounded Father de la Colombière's interior life. A man reveals himself in his letters. This is undoubtedly true for the most part, but no letters reveal a man as do the outpourings of his heart in God's presence. Here, surely, if anywhere, a soul is utterly sincere. Father de la Colombière has left us some of these intimate notes of his prayer, and it is to them we must turn when studying the character of the apostle of the Sacred Heart. He does not spare himself, but we have no reason to believe that the failings of which he so often and in such humble language accuses himself were mere exaggerations. Rather should we praise God for His triumph in the soul of His servant in spite of all weakness and failure. Even St. Paul says: "Gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of God may be made perfect in me." We have already seen how Father de la Colombière had to wage a continual war against his desire for esteem and the temptation to vainglory. In these notes, as well as in the spiritual retreat which he made a year or two later than the time of which we are writing, the young priest tells us how much it cost him to conquer his pride in the matter of self-accusation, of his tendency to human respect, of his natural love of pleasure. From these notes, too, we gather, on the other hand, that he had an affectionate and grateful nature: "It requires," he writes, "great strength and grace to resist the charm which is found in the trust placed in us by those whom we have helped," and he had, besides, a determined will to do God's will at all costs, a fervent desire to advance daily in perfection, and a great zeal for souls.

No one in reading the writings of such a man can help admiring

the work of grace in his soul. He fought and he conquered, but it was no easy victory, no child's play. Inch by inch he climbed the steep path of perfection, urging us by his example to take courage in the battle for the "better gifts." Who can help feeling endeared to the man who lets us into the secret of his struggles and shows us once more how wonderful is our God in His Saints? Listen to these words: "As to what usually terrifies nature: prisons, constant ill-health, and even death—all this seems easy compared with this everlasting war with self, this vigilance against the attacks of the world and of self-love, this living death in the midst of the world."

We can only give extracts of these lights in prayer—but they are sufficient for our purpose—they show us a Saint in the making:

"It is strange how many enemies have to be faced from the moment that we resolve to become saints. Everything seems let loose against us; the devil with his artifices, the world with its attractions, and nature by the resistance it offers to our good desires; the praise of the good, the ridicule of the bad, and the solicitations of the lukewarm. When God visits us we are liable to vanity: when He withdraws Himself, fear and discouragement may succeed the greatest fervour. Our friends tempt us by our habitual complaisance towards them; the indifferent do so by our fear of displeasing them. In fervour, indiscretion is to be feared, in moderation sensuality, and self-love everywhere. What are we to do? There is no one to fight for us, but Thou, our God. Not knowing what we ought to do, this only remains, that we should turn our eyes to Thee."

"Above all, as holiness does not consist in being faithful for a day or a year, but in persevering and increasing in grace until death, God must be our buckler, a shield which encircles us, because we are attacked on every side: 'With a shield, He will encompass thee.' God must do everything. So much the better; we need not fear that He will fail us in any way. We have only to acknowledge our own powerlessness, and to be fervent and persevering in asking for help through the intercession of Mary, to whom God refuses nothing. Even this we

cannot do without a great grace, or rather many great graces, from God."

"By the infinite mercy of God I seem to feel rather more strength against the temptations to vainglory. The same objects present themselves, but with less force, and they no longer produce the same impression. They have begun to weary me, and to appear less delightful. The reasons which prove to me their vanity are much more deeply convincing to me than formerly. This has been the case especially since I made a sincere resolution to renounce them entirely by a way which is extremely efficacious and infallible. With God's grace I should have carried this resolution into execution the next day, if I had not been told not to do so."

Quando bene erit sine illo, aut quando male cum illo?—"When was it ever good without Him, or when was it bad with Him?"

"When during prayer one finds the time long on account of impatience to pass on to another occupation, it is well to say to oneself: 'Soul, art thou weary of thy God? Art thou not satisfied with Him? Thou possessest Him, and dost thou seek for something else? Where canst thou be better than in His company? Where canst thou profit more?' I have experienced that this calms the mind, and unites it with God."

"Since perfection consists in seeking to please God in all things, and to please God only, I was convinced more strongly than usual, that we must not hesitate on those occasions when we can please God, though thereby we displease men, and gain some esteem with Him, whilst losing some of that which men have for us. I resolved, therefore, not to hesitate when opportunities present themselves to humble myself and make myself known to men as I really am and have been."

"Having been vexed at a small mortification which I did not expect, I was deeply ashamed, recognizing therein the little love I have for the Cross, so that I have reason to think that all the desires which I have felt on various occasions to suffer sorrows and humiliations have only been apparent, or that at least I was looking at something else in these things rather than at God and the Cross of Jesus Christ. Our Lord, continuing in His mercy to take occasion of my own ingratitude to grant

me new graces, caused light to follow this shame, which gave me to understand that the love of the Cross is the first step we must take in order to be pleasing to Him; and that I am only now beginning, since I am so far removed from the feelings of the saints, who rejoiced at the opportunities for suffering which were sent to them by God. When one looks at our Lord, how cowardly it is to grumble at the small mortifications He sends us! These thoughts gave me a strength which I did not before possess to endure whatever comes, and even to seek mortifications if they do not present themselves. This seems to have cured me of a certain timidity and delicacy which made me fear, amongst other things, the severity of the season, and cling to certain comforts which may be dispensed with without much risk. Praised for evermore be the infinite goodness of my God, Who, instead of punishing me for my faults as I deserved, causes me to find therein such great treasures of grace."

"St. Francis Xavier used to speak of God on every occasion and to all kinds of persons. I speak little of Thee, my God! It is because I think of Thee little and love Thee little. I can do this by example . . . by regularity and the practice of virtue. Am I not, on the contrary, a stumbling-block? If my example were to be followed, would there be regularity and mortification in the house? It is no thanks to me that the Society is not a collection of idle and sensual persons."

"I thought that I would willingly give the last drop of my blood to save one soul from hell. What happiness for me if at the hour of death I could say to Jesus Christ: 'Thou didst shed Thy Blood for the salvation of sinners, and I have prevented these persons from rendering it useless to themselves.' But what shall I myself say if whilst thinking of converting others, I am not converted myself? Shall I labour to people paradise and go to fill hell? No, my God. Thou art too good, Thou wilt help me to save myself, Thou wilt strengthen me in the works by which I desire to merit paradise."

"On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, I resolved to abandon myself so completely to God, Who is always in me, and in Whom I am and live, as not to be

troubled about my behaviour exterior, or even interior, resting gently in His arms, fearing neither temptation, nor delusion, nor prosperity, nor adversity, nor my evil inclinations, nor even my faults, hoping that He will guide everything by His infinite goodness and wisdom, so that all will turn to His glory; wishing neither to be loved nor supported by anyone, desiring to have Him for my father and mother, my brethren and my friends, and for all who might have some regard for me. One is at peace in so sweet and safe a shelter. I need fear neither men nor devils; neither myself, nor life, nor death. If God will bear with me I am only too happy. I think that in this I have found the secret of living contentedly, and that henceforth what I used to fear in the spiritual life should no longer cause me alarm."

"Reflecting yesterday evening after my prayer upon what it was that had nearly shaken my resolutions, I discovered that I had not yet overcome human respect, that vain fear of man; and that although by Thy infinite mercy, my God, I have come off well on many occasions, aided by Thy all-powerful grace, yet I recognize my worthlessness, and I know that it is Thou alone Who workest whatever is good in me. I should continually offend Thee grievously if Thou didst not stretch forth Thy hand to withdraw me from the mire into which my too-yielding disposition would plunge me, if Thou didst not use towards me the dominion which Thou hast over all creatures. But, my God, what thanks shall I render to Thee for all Thy benefits to me? However unworthy and ungrateful I am, I will praise Thee for them, kind Saviour, and will proclaim everywhere that Thou alone art to be loved, served, and praised. In order to establish me in this truth, Thou gavest me to understand that human respect makes us do evil through fear of offending men, causes us to omit what is good through fear of not pleasing them, or makes us do good to please them. Indeed I see that from fear of displeasing men one gives without permission, breaks silence, and hears evil speaking and murmuring, and one does not inform Superiors when it is one's duty to do so. It is a strange thing that anyone should prefer to draw down upon himself God's anger rather than run the

risk of offending man. Shame and sorrow so to act in God's sight. What do I expect from man? What have I to fear from him? In religion one often has good desires, but it is strange how often we fail to carry them out for fear of men. What will they say if I wish to be exact, devout, mortified? . . . If we are not upon our guard, we lose almost our whole life, through the wish to please men. What is our obligation towards them? What benefit do we expect from them? In this we are more unfortunate and contemptible than those who labour for money. What a mistake it is! These men whom I foolishly fear in religion expect to see me practise the good which I am afraid to do in their presence. They know that I left the world in order to be virtuous, devout and mortified, and they see that I am not so. This is a fool, they say, who swerves from his end; if he wished to live in this manner, why did he not remain in the world, where he might, without sin, be what it is dangerous for him to be in religion? This is what those think of me whose opinion I fear. My God, am I not most miserable to offend Thee and not to please men? If I were to do as much for Thee, Thou wouldst judge me favourably, and men would not have this contempt for my conduct; for every man of good sense values virtue, even if he does not practise it."

"When I consider my inconstancy I shudder and fear to be among the lost. What disorder, what violent changes are in me! At one time I am gay, at another sad; to-day genial to everybody, to-morrow like a hedgehog which pricks if it is touched. It is a sign of small virtue; it is because nature still reigns within me and my passions are unmortified. A truly virtuous man is always the same. If I sometimes do good, it is rather from caprice than from virtue."

"I know, my God, and experience has taught me but too well that one is good one day and slack the next, that we relax insensibly. Why am I no longer what I was in the noviciate? . . . The slightest thing makes me forget my good resolutions; how shall I guard against this? How shall I act?"

"How wonderful it is, my God, that Thou shouldst sometimes use my weakness to withdraw souls from the gates of eternal death! If it is only necessary that I should desire this,

I desire it with my whole heart. It is true one needs to be a saint in order to make saints of others, and my faults show me how far removed I am from holiness; but make me holy, my God. Spare me not, in order that Thou mayst make me good; for I wish to become so at any cost."

"In order to know Thee, my God, we must cling no longer to earth, and I feel how strongly my heart still leans towards earthly things. So many desires to be esteemed, loved and praised, though all glory and praise are due to Thee alone, and so much love for my own comfort, make me shudder, for when I think myself most secure from the attacks of self-love, I find that it has taken me by surprise and made sport of me, to my shame and confusion. Open my eyes, kind Jesus. O Lord, that I may see. Let me know Thee. I cannot know myself without knowing Thee. All my desire is in Thee. All else displeases me, and myself more than all the rest; for I know nothing more repulsive, contemptible, and worthless."

"I felt myself moved to imitate the simplicity of God in my affections, loving God only, cherishing no other love but this, which is easy, since I find in God all that I can love elsewhere. But my friends, they love me and I love them: Thou seest this and I feel it. My God! alone good, alone amiable! Must I sacrifice these to Thee, since Thou desirest to have me entirely? I will make this sacrifice, which will cost me more dearly than the first which I made Thee in leaving father and mother. So I make this sacrifice with my whole heart, since Thou dost forbid me to share my friendship with any creature. Accept this painful sacrifice, but in exchange, Divine Saviour, be Thou their friend. As Thou wilt take their place with me, take my place with them. I will remind Thee of them daily in my prayers, and of what Thou owest them in me, in promising to be my substitute. Happy are they if they profit by this gain! I will importune Thee so urgently that I will induce Thee to make them know and value the blessing they will possess in the command Thou givest me, to have no longer any friend, in order to be Thine. Jesus, be Thou their friend, their sole and real friend! Be my friend, since Thou commandest me to be Thine."

Such were the outpourings of Father de la Colombière's soul in prayer. They have revealed to us the man whom Our Lord chose to be the friend and director of His chosen spouse, St. Margaret Mary; the priest chosen by God to be the apostle of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of His Divine Son; the Jesuit who surely followed closely in the footsteps of his Father, St. Ignatius; and the Confessor of the Faith who was called by one who was herself a Saint, "A man after God's own Heart."

CHAPTER VI

Lyons: 1670-1674

“Education is the continuation of the highest and noblest of divine works: the creation of souls.”—MONSEIGNEUR DUPANLOUP, BISHOP OF ORLEANS.

IT is a fallacy common to the children of each succeeding generation to think that the hard work is done by those who learn, and that, in comparison, teaching is but a pleasant pastime! Those who have taught know how great a fallacy this is. In these days, when the perpetual cry for further and yet further development in the work of education seems to hinder so many from joining the teaching Orders, it is consoling to see how many of God's Saints gave themselves to this work. Claude de la Colombière was among the number. He taught strenuously in the four years he spent in Lyons. Not for a moment did he lose sight of the motives of his work: love for God and zeal for souls. With these great objects before him, he gave himself heart and soul to the work assigned to him by obedience. Exact in the observance of his Rule and unswervingly faithful to his religious duties, he found, as so many still find, that a life given to teaching need not necessarily mean a less spiritual life than the life of a hermit. Teaching was no impediment to Father de la Colombière's growth in holiness; rather by its countless opportunities for self-abnegation and self-sacrifice did it develop his character and fit him for the glorious mission destined for him by God.

Father de la Colombière entered upon his duties in the College of the Holy Trinity at the reunion of the classes in the autumn of 1670. It was twelve years since he had left the College, where, it will be remembered, he had passed through his classes with remarkable success. It was not as a stranger that Father Claude returned to Lyons. Many of the religious who had been masters were still at the College. And the members of his family were well known in the town. His elder brother, Humbert, had married Madeleine Paquet, the

daughter of the Sheriff of Lyons. Madeleine was one of twenty-one children, so Humbert had numerous relations by marriage. Joseph de la Colombière, Claude's youngest brother, had been chosen by the Town Council to give the discourse annually delivered on December 21st, when the new members of the Lyons Council were elected.

The classes at the College reopened, as was customary, on October 18th, the Feast of St. Luke. Father de la Colombière, in conjunction with Father Laurent de Cellières, undertook to teach the two-year course of rhetoric. In addition he had to get up the College plays, which were an annual institution. Father Claude was fresh from Paris, where he had assisted at the theatricals performed before the King in the College of Clermont, so it was natural that after this experience the same work should fall to his share in Lyons.

When the month of December came round there was quite a reunion for the members of the de la Colombière family. Joseph delivered his discourse before the élite of Lyons, and showed for the first time that he, too, was possessed of a considerable gift of eloquence—a gift which later on he used with such success for the salvation of souls in Canada. Monsieur de la Colombière was present, rejoicing to be in the company of his four sons. Marguerite only was absent, but even she was in Lyons, for, shortly before, she had entered the noviciate of the Visitation Convent of Bellecour. Even the joy of seeing his four sons, and knowing that they were all so happily settled in life, could not make up to Bertrand de la Colombière for the loss of his daughter. He was getting on in years and his health was enfeebled, and he was thus unable to cope with the sorrow of losing his child.

During his visit to Lyons he had gone to see Marguerite at Bellecour; the sight of her rekindled his grief, and on his return home to Vienne he became so ill that, fearing his life was in danger, the postulant had no choice but to return home to nurse her father. In this decision she was encouraged by her brother Claude, who assured her that God would not let her suffer in the fulfilment of her duty, and that her leaving the Convent now for so good a cause would not prevent her from

becoming a nun later when she was free. Three years later, her father's health being re-established, Marguerite was able to enter religion again. Monsieur de la Colombière, afraid lest his daughter should enter some Convent where he could seldom see her, and fearful, on the other hand, of opposing the designs of God for the soul of his child, effected a compromise by making her promise to enter the Convent of the Visitation at Condrien, which was close to Vienne. Father de la Colombière wrote to her at once: "The more completely you detach yourself from the things of earth, and fix your heart on heavenly things, the more will your peace of heart grow and increase. Fearing lest any part of your present state of happiness should spring from your natural love of quiet and your dislike of the world, I most earnestly beg of you to make Our Lord the only object of your joys and hope. Remember, it is the Cross you must embrace, for the life you have chosen is one of obedience and self-denial." The letter goes on at some length. He threatens neither to write to her nor visit her if she aims only at being "moderately" good, and then adds: "You will think I have written you a long sermon, but I entreat you to lay to heart what I have said to you, and not just read the letter and forget it. I assure you that all that I have said is only inspired by my very great desire for your growth in holiness."

Marguerite received the veil in the month of May, 1674. Claude preached the clothing sermon, a fact thus chronicled in the annals of the Convent at Condrieu: "Father de la Colombière preached a most eloquent sermon on the advantages of consecrating one's life to God." The manuscript goes on to say: "Among other pious women whom we have received during the last six years, we had the privilege of giving the holy habit to the only sister of Father de la Colombière, whose piety is so well known, that, recognizing the same qualities in his sister, we could not but look upon her coming amongst us as a source of thanksgiving. To it we owe the visits of that great servant of God, whose exhortations and stirring discourses urged us on in the path of perfection."

The family reunion was this time complete, save for the saintly mother who had brought up her children so piously

and well. Bertrand de la Colombière saw himself surrounded by his four sons and his daughter. Humbert was well known for his talent and virtue, and was held in high esteem by all. Claude had already a reputation as a preacher and a master. Floris, the Archdeacon of Vienne, watched over the interests of God in the cathedral of that town. Joseph, who had distinguished himself at the Bar, was about to throw up his worldly advantages and embrace the apostolic life; while Marguerite was entering upon a long and fervent religious life. Yes, truly Bertrand de la Colombière was blessed in his children.

In October of 1671 the famous Père de la Chaise had been appointed Rector of the College of the Holy Trinity, so that for three years Father de la Colombière lived on intimate terms with him, and made known to him his interior life, his aspirations, his struggles, and his ever-increasing desire for perfection. When Père de la Chaise became later on the confessor of Louis XIV. and that King was petitioned to send a Jesuit Father to England as chaplain to the Duchess of York, Père de la Chaise knew well what he was doing when he chose Father de la Colombière to fill the post.

At the opening of the classes this year Father Claude was chosen to deliver the usual discourse, and he captivated his audience by his eloquence in treating of the *Ætas litterarum aurea*—"The golden age of letters."

The year 1672 was marked by the holy death of Père Papon, Father de la Colombière's Novice Master. This was a great sorrow to Father Claude, and he lost in Père Papon a Father as well as a model of all his religious virtues.

The archives of the College at Lyons seem to mark out this year as a particularly fervent one: "Religious discipline was so exactly observed, and by God's grace the desire for virtue so great, that the elder members of the Community declared that they had never before seen such fervour. Perfect charity reigned. And the religious seemed to vie with each other as to who should be the most humble."

In 1673 Father Claude was again chosen for the autumn discourse and spoke in praise of French orators—"Laus oratoris Galli." There was a reason for his choice of this subject:

the year before when addressing his pupils he had told them that the writers of the age of Augustus had robbed them of all hope of themselves being able to attain to perfection in the art of speaking and writing. Now he wished to encourage them, for fear lest, losing heart, they should not put forth their best efforts to attain their end.

In the same year Père de la Chaise named Father de la Colombière as preacher in the Church of the Holy Trinity. This brought him before the public and into relation with many souls. The Jesuits were careful whom they chose to represent the Society in the great pulpits of France; only the most learned, prudent, and holy men were entrusted with this work and with the direction of souls in the confessional. As Father de la Colombière was at this time but thirty-two years of age and had only been ordained four years, it was a great tribute to his worth and holiness to choose him for this post. He was obliged to preach every Sunday and feast-day in the College Church. Father de Colonia tells us that it was during this year of preaching, 1673-1674, that Father de la Colombière composed most of the sermons which he afterwards preached in London, in the Chapel of St. James's Palace. This was probably the case, though of course he had no idea whatever in 1673 of his future work. We shall have occasion to speak of these sermons again when dealing with Father de la Colombière's life at the English Court.

The times, as we have seen, were corrupted by Jansenism, so in his sermons we find that a very high and perhaps severe moral standard is held up to all. "The true moral teaching of our religion," he writes, "can only be found in the Gospel, the Epistles of the Apostles and of the Fathers of the Church. . . . When we want to preach severity, we must do it as Jesus Christ did it—by example. The true character of Christian severity is to be gentle towards others and severe towards oneself. To act otherwise is to be an impostor or a comedian, and not a preacher!" Out of a necessary precaution Father de la Colombière does not attack the Jansenists by name, but he often uses the words "false devotees," and all he says on this subject was against the heresy. In all his sermons

he showed himself to be the declared antagonist of the enemies of God.

A magnificent panegyric on St. Bonaventure was preached in the Franciscan Church of the Cordeliers. The foundation of the Saint's virtue, he says, lies in the fact that "God gave him the science of the saints." The preacher went on to extol the Order of St. Francis: "The sanctity of the Order draws to it continually a large number of persons illustrious for their birth and for their learning. Everyone looks upon the Franciscan Order as one of the pillars of the Catholic religion."

The sermon on Our Lady of Mount Carmel, from which we have already quoted, was preached on July 16th, 1674. On August 12th, the Feast of St. Clare, Father de la Colombière preached at a clothing in the Convent of the Poor Clares. In the simplest and most beautiful language, he compares the ceremony of receiving the veil to that of a spiritual espousal, and he sketches the portrait of the Spouse for the soul about to begin her preparation for the religious life. "The Heavenly Spouse is beautiful above the sons of men, but the beauty is hidden; you will possess Him long before you see Him; He is of high birth, but the only dowry He asks you to bring is poverty. From Him you may expect an ardent and faithful love, but He is as jealous as He is tender." And then the preacher went on in the same strain to develop the glories and the trials of the religious life.

The long period of preparation for the apostolic life, common to all members of the Society of Jesus, was now drawing to a close for Father de la Colombière. One of his brethren has left us a portrait of the saintly man as he knew him in 1674: "He was distinguished for his intellectual gifts. He wrote with extreme elegance and purity of language. His straightforwardness and gentleness gave a charm to all he did; there was a certain dignity about him which was very pleasing. One could easily believe that he had high ideals even in the most ordinary actions. He knew how to make himself agreeable to all, and his grave demeanour had nothing repelling about it. If he felt himself obliged to differ from others in conversation, he did it with deference and respect, so that for the most part people

came over to his way of thinking. He appeared as though anxious to learn himself. In his conversation, his carriage, his walk, and all his exterior behaviour, one saw the accomplished gentleman and the perfect religious."

Such was Father de la Colombière when, in 1674, he was summoned by his Superiors to begin his tertianship.

CHAPTER VII

Tertianship : 1674—1675

“It is right to give to God and to our soul the whole application which is demanded by the most important affair we have to deal with in our lives.”
—FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

THE Society of Jesus does not admit its members to their final vows until many years after their entry into religion. In the October of 1673 fifteen years had elapsed since Claude de la Colombière had left his home and entered the noviciate at Avignon; but it was not until November 20th, 1674, that the General of the Society, Père Oliva, wrote to Père de la Chaise, the rector, and told him to receive Claude to profession.

In order to prepare for this final step in the Society, the members go through a third year of probation, known as the tertianship. During this year, the duties of which resemble those of the noviceship, the tertians give themselves up to the exercises of the interior life.

There were two Jesuit houses at Lyons: the College of the Holy Trinity and another house dedicated to St. Joseph. This latter building was situated on the banks of the Rhone. It was here that Father de la Colombière was to make his tertianship. October was usually the time for the tertians to assemble. Father de la Colombière appears to have gone to St. Joseph's earlier than this.

Perhaps he went for a period of rest before entering upon his new duties. We read in a letter that he wrote at this time to Père Bonhours that he was very subject to bad headaches, which prevented him from working. The probable date of this letter is July 1st, 1674. He either gave up his preaching then or waited until the course of sermons closed on September 8th, and then went at once to St. Joseph's.

Father Gilbert Athiand was Master of the Tertians, and had this year eleven Jesuits under his care.

Early in the year the tertians, for the second time in their career, follow the exercises of St. Ignatius for thirty days. Father de la Colombière and his ten companions began their retreat on November 4th and continued it till December 8th. It will not surprise us to be told of the generous spirit of love and self-sacrifice which filled Claude's heart. In those hours of intimate communion with his Lord, he saw the horizon of heavenly things widen out before him. He experienced the fulfilment of Our Lord's promise: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." The beauty of things divine captivated his soul and strengthened him to return love for love by a complete surrender of self to Christ.

Happily he kept a journal of this retreat—a book which later on fell into the hands of St. Margaret Mary, and of which she wrote: "We have found this devotion [to the Sacred Heart] in the book of the 'Retreat' of Father de la Colombière, who is venerated as a Saint. I am not sure whether you know it, or whether you have the book, but it would give me great pleasure to give it to you." This was written to Mother de Soudeilles at Moulins on July 4th, 1686. In the September of the same year and to the same person the Saint again writes: "You could hardly believe the good results that this devotion produces in souls who have had the happiness of learning it by means of this holy man, who was himself dedicated to the Sacred Heart and lived only to make It loved, honoured, and glorified. It was this, I think, that raised him to such a height of perfection in so short a space of time. . . . You can scarcely believe the great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus which our Sisters of Semur in l'Auxois testify to having drawn from reading the book of the 'Retreat' of Father de la Colombière."

This retreat we give in full (see Appendix), for though it is long, it is so full of solid instruction and breathes forth such a deep piety in every line, that to curtail it would deprive us of the very best proof of the holiness of its writer. The "Retreat" was first published in French in 1684 and has been frequently reprinted. Père Pouplard, S.J., commenting on the book in 1885, writes: "No one can seriously read the 'Spiritual Retreat of Father de la Colombière' without exclaiming

almost at every page, 'These are the words, these are the thoughts of a Saint !' "

During the second week of the exercises Father de la Colombière, with the consent of Père Athiand, resolved to take a special vow binding himself to keep all his rules and constitutions under pain of sin. No sooner had he formed this project than the devil attacked him furiously in order to prevent so heroic a sacrifice. He was tempted to thoughts of self-complacency. The fear of offending God by vainglory was in danger of preventing him from showing his love for God with unlimited generosity. Father de la Colombière turned to the thought of his own nothingness, acknowledged his own unworthiness of any grace or favour, and accepted till death every temptation and annoyance from the devil if such were the Will of God. Sanctity appeared to him so great and so precious that he felt he could not purchase it at too dear a rate. With God's grace he triumphed over hell, and, urged by love, he made his vow in the fulness of his heart.

PLAN OF VOW.

"*Juravi et statui custodire judicia tuæ*—'I have sworn, and I have resolved to keep the judgments of Thy justice.'

"I feel myself drawn to make a vow to God to observe our Constitutions, our Common Rules, our Rules of Modesty, and the Rules for Priests, in the following manner :

Summary of Constitutions.

"1. To labour all my life for my own perfection by the observance of the Rules, and for the sanctification of others, by profiting by all the opportunities which obedience or Providence shall afford me of using my zeal without clashing with the Rules of discretion and of Christian Prudence. (Rule 2.)

"2. To go indifferently, without exception or comment, wherever obedience shall send me. (Rule 3.)

"3. To confer with the Superior as to exterior penances, and not to omit unnecessarily such as he thinks good for me to do; to make a general confession each year, the examen of

conscience twice a day, to have a fixed confessor and to disclose to him my whole conscience. (Rules 4, 5, 6, 7.)

“4. To love my relations only in Jesus Christ. I seem by God’s grace to do this already, so this point will not be difficult. (Rule 8.)

“5. To think it right that I should be reproved, and that my Superiors should be informed of my defects, and to inform them of those committed by my brethren in cases wherein I consider myself obliged thereto by the Rule. (Rules 9 and 10.)

“6. To wish to be outraged and loaded with calumny and insults; and to pass for a fool, though without giving occasion for it, and if God be not offended thereby. It seems to me that in this I have only to ask God to maintain in me the feelings which He had already given me in His infinite mercy. (Rule 11.)

“7. Concerning the greatest self-denial and continual mortification, I think with God’s grace I can vow: (1) Never to have any efficacious will with regard to life, health, prosperity, adversity, offices or places, except in so far as this will shall be conformed to His. (2) To wish, as far as I can, for whatever is most contrary to my natural inclinations, if that be not opposed to His greater glory. I seem through His infinite goodness to be almost in this state. (3) Never to seek for what flatters the senses, such as sights, concerts, odours, or things that gratify the taste, nor for what encourages vanity; to seek none of these, neither in my conversation, nor in any actions; as to furniture and clothes, to be satisfied with what is given to me, unless obedience, or the Rule relating to the care of health, should oblige me to act differently. (4) To shun no mortification which shall present itself, unless I judge, according to God, that I ought to act otherwise for some real reason. (5) Never to enjoy any pleasure which necessity brings me, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, nor those which, in the Society, cannot be avoided without affectation or singularity, such as recreation, particular dishes, etc.; never to take them for the pleasure which nature finds therein, but to renounce them in my heart, and actually mortify myself in them as far as God shall inspire me to do, as far as I can do so without attracting too much attention. (Rule 12.)

“ 8. The four following Rules are included in the others: as to the seventeenth, which relates to purity of intention, I can vow, I think: (1) Never, with God’s help, to do anything except for His glory, at least with reflection. (2) Never to do anything or omit anything out of human respect. This last point pleases me much, and I think it will establish me in great inward peace. (Rule 17.)

“ 9. This includes, if I mistake not, the observance of the nineteenth. (Rule 19.)

“ 10. As to the twenty-first, I can vow: (1) Always to make my meditation, and to observe, both in the preparation and during the course of it, the additions of St. Ignatius, unless reason or charity, or some equally good reason, should lead me to dispense with any of these points. (2) As to Mass and the Office, to keep the Rule for Priests. (Rule 21.)

“ 11. As to poverty, I have already made a vow to keep all the Rules concerning it which have been given us by St. Ignatius.

“ 12. As to chastity, never to look at any object calculated to suggest thoughts contrary to this virtue; at least deliberately or without strict necessity; never to read or listen to anything unchaste, unless charity or the exigencies of my office compel me to do so. To observe the rules for Priests as to confession and visiting women.

“ 13. Always to eat with temperance, modesty and propriety: to say the blessing and thanksgiving at table with respect and devotion.

“ 14. As to obedience, I have already vowed to practise it according to our Rules.

“ 15. To observe what relates to letters sent or received according as the Superiors shall wish them to be observed.

“ 16. To render an account of conscience according to the formula which we have in our Constitutions.

“ 17. To keep nothing hidden from my confessor, at least of what he ought to know in order to guide me.

“ 18. In what relates to union and brotherly charity, things purely secular, and the care of health, I have no difficulty, nor in the manner of acting to be observed in illness.

Common Rules.

“To make the examen of conscience and the particular examen twice a day, and to mark the result, according to the teaching of St. Ignatius; spiritual reading when I am able; not to absent myself from the sermon without permission when I am in the house; only to make my confession to my usual confessor; to keep the Friday abstinence according to the custom of the Society; not to preach without the approval of my Superiors. The three following Rules concern poverty; the rest seem to me to present no difficulty. One can vow, I think, never to dispense oneself from them without leave.

“When arriving in a house one should remember to ask the following permissions from the Superiors: (1) To have books; (2) to see the sick frequently, unless it is the custom to ask leave each time that one visits them; (3) to enter the rooms of certain persons for a moment on certain occasions, such as to ask advice, or return a book, etc.; (4) to speak to externs in the house, and to send for them to come there if necessary; (5) to execute the commissions of those outside, in the house, and of those in the house outside, when asked, and one deems there is nothing unusual in it; (6) to write letters, on the understanding that they are shown to the proper person, unless it is the custom to ask permission each time that one wishes to write.

Rules of Modesty, and for Priests.

“The Rules of Modesty are drawn up in such a way that they can cause no difficulty, any more than the Rules for Priests. The Rule which requires the instruction of children does not, in my opinion, impose a greater obligation than that contained in the vow made by the professed.

“One can bind oneself by vow to keep the Rules for special offices, when one is selected for them.

Motives for this Vow.

“1. To impose upon myself the indispensable necessity for fulfilling as far as possible the duties of my state, and of being faithful to God, even in the smallest things.

“ 2. To break, at one blow, all the chains of self-love, and to deprive it for ever of the hope of some future gratification, a hope which seems to me always to exist in the heart, in whatever state of mortification one may be.

“ 3. To acquire at once the merit of a long life, in the uncertainty we have of living a single day: to place myself in a position not to fear that death may come and snatch from me the means of glorifying God more and more; for the will to do so everlastingly cannot fail to be taken for the act, since I bind myself so strictly to the performance.

“ 4. To make reparation for past irregularities, by pledging myself to be regular as long as it shall please God to prolong my life. This motive touches me deeply, and urges me more powerfully than all the rest.

“ 5. To acknowledge to some extent the infinite mercies which God has exercised towards me, in binding myself indispenably to execute His slightest orders.

“ 6. Out of respect for the Divine Will, which ought to be performed under pain of everlasting damnation, though God in His infinite goodness does not always bind us to it by such severe penalties.

“ 7. To do, on my side, whatever depends upon me that I may belong unreservedly to God, to detach my heart from all creatures, and to love God with all my might, at least with an effective love.

Some considerations which encourage me to make this Vow.

“ 1. I find no more difficulty in observing what this vow includes, than a man who is naturally inclined to pleasure must have in preserving chastity, which involves him in many struggles and much watchfulness.

“ 2. God, Who inspired our Rules to St. Ignatius, intended them to be kept. It is therefore not impossible to do so; there is not even a moral impossibility. But the vow, far from rendering the observance more difficult, facilitates it, not only by removing temptations through fear of committing a grievous sin, but also because it binds God to afford greater help in need.

"3. Berchmans spent five years in the Society without his conscience reproaching him with the violation of any Rule: why cannot I, by God's grace, do the same, at an age when one ought to have greater strength, and at which one is less exposed to human respect, which is the most dangerous enemy to be combated?

"4. I am not afraid that this vow will deprive me of peace of soul, and become for me a rock of scandal: *Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam, et non est illis scandalum*—'Much peace for those who love Thy law, and for them there is no scandal.' This is an article of faith; and, consequently, the more one loves the law, the greater tranquillity one finds: *Ambulabo in latitudine, quia mandata tua exquisivi*—'I will walk in wide space, because I have kept Thy commandments.' Exactness in fulfilling the slightest observance sets the mind at liberty instead of producing constraint.

"5. I seem to have been living for some time almost in the way that I shall be bound to do after this vow. It is rather out of the wish to persevere in it than from a desire to do something new and extraordinary that I have entertained this idea.

"6. The mere thought of making this vow detaches me from worldly things, almost as if I felt the approach of death.

"7. I do not lean upon my resolution, nor upon my own strength, but upon the goodness of God, which is infinite, and upon His grace, which He never fails to bestow abundantly, and all the more when one strives to serve Him unreservedly: *Non delinquent omnes qui sperant in eo*—'They will not fail who hope in Him.'

"8. I think that this step will only bind me to rather more watchfulness, for I think that I would not now break any of these Rules deliberately.

"9. To anticipate scruples, I can pledge myself to nothing that is doubtful.

"10. I can bind myself upon this condition that if, when some time has elapsed, I find that this vow causes me disquiet, the engagement shall cease; if not, it shall last for life.

"11. When one has permission, one does not break a Rule, at least when it is a question of an exterior Rule; one must be

in a sad state if one prefers to break a Rule and displease God rather than say a word to the Superior, even if it be not under pain of mortal sin.

“12. I do not consider myself bound to anything upon all occasions when another might dispense himself from the Rule without acting contrary to perfection.

“13. The thought of this engagement does not alarm me, it gives me joy; it seems as if, instead of being a slave, I am about to enter into the realm of liberty and peace. Self-love will cease to cavil when there will be so much danger in obeying its movements. I seem to have attained to happiness, and that I have at last found the treasure which must be so dearly bought.

“14. This is not transitory fervour, for I have long been contemplating this step; but I had reserved the complete investigation of it for this occasion; the nearer the time comes for putting it in practice, the easier it seems, and the greater strength and determination I feel.”

This Vow Father de la Colombière laid before his director with the following words:

“Notwithstanding all this, I shall wait for your decision before proceeding further. Therefore I beg you to examine this paper, and to reflect especially upon these last considerations, in which you will perhaps find indications of the spirit of God; if not, you need only say that you do not think it well for me to carry out this project, and I shall have the same respect for your opinion which I owe to the word of God.”

CHAPTER VIII

Paray-le-Monial: 1675

“As soon as they named Paray to me, my heart bounded with joy.”
—ST. MARGARET MARY.

IT is only for grave reasons and with leave of the General of the Order that the years of tertianship allotted to each Jesuit may be shortened. Such reasons seem, however, to have existed in the case of Father de la Colombière, for the Father-General, Père Oliva, admitted him to profession early in 1675, only seven months at the outside from the time of his arrival at St. Joseph's.

The date of Father Claude's final profession in the Society coincided with his thirty-fourth birthday, February 2nd, 1675, and that year the feast fell on a Saturday, so that he must have counted himself doubly Our Lady's own.

Almost at once he was called upon to enter upon the great work of his life. The Superior of the small Jesuit College at Paray-le-Monial had been named Rector of the College at Gray on January 26th, 1675, and Father de la Colombière was elected to fill the vacant post at Paray. He left Lyons a few days after February 2nd and went to Roanne to receive instructions from the Jesuit Superior there, as the Paray Community was dependent on Roanne. Before February 15th he had entered upon his new duties as Rector at Paray—that chosen town, obscure then in the eyes of the world, but known everywhere to-day as the scene of those wonderful revelations of Christ to His servant, St. Margaret Mary.

Paray-le-Monial is a small town situated in the Department of Saône-et-Loire, which is in the Province of Burgundy. As Father de la Colombière neared the town from the south, the first thing that struck him must have been the ancient parish church of Notre Dame, built on a hill, and also the three bell-towers of the beautiful church belonging to the deanery. In those days Paray was surrounded by walls which were demolished only at the end of the eighteenth century.

Father de la Colombière must have crossed the bridge known as the "Pont de la Bourbince" and traversed the road, bordered with houses, along which the pilgrims to the Shrine of the Sacred Heart walk to-day on their way from the station to the Convent of the Visitation. Entering by the gate "du Périer," Father Claude would soon have reached the Church of St. Nicholas, under the shadow of which nestled the Jesuit house which he was about to immortalize.

The inhabitants of Paray were for the most part poor; a good number were engaged in agricultural pursuits, while others gained their livelihood by tanning, leather-dressing, and cloth-weaving.

For a long time the Huguenot religion prevailed in Paray, but after the foundation of the Jesuit house by Père Paul de Barry in 1626 the number of Catholics, then not greater than about a dozen families in all, increased rapidly, so that by 1685, ten years after the arrival of Father de la Colombière, not more than thirty Huguenot families remained. Although the inhabitants of the town belonged mainly to the professional and industrial classes, there were a fair number of the nobility who resided, for at least a portion of the year, in the town. Among these may be mentioned the brother of Mademoiselle de Lyonne, François de Reclesnes de Lyonne, who resided at the château with his mother and sister, both of whom became intimately known to the new Jesuit rector. The Marquis de Vichy-Chamron may also be mentioned, and to those who know the life of St. Margaret Mary, this name will recall one of her greatest trials and all the sweetness and patience with which she bore it. Mesdemoiselles Catherine and Marie Mayneaud de Bisefranc were also friends and spiritual daughters to Father de la Colombière; while Guillaume Billet, Lord of Seul-les-Paray, was the great friend and medical adviser of the Visitation nuns and the Jesuits.

A society of priests, whose origin was considered ancient as far back as 1451, existed in Paray, and this fact gives us the key to many of the trials of St. Margaret Mary's life—trials which were to be removed by Father de la Colombière. These priests formed neither a community nor a chapter—they were simply

united under the parish priest, and occupied themselves with the duties imposed by the foundation statutes of the parish church and of any outlying chapels. Any priest born in the parish of Notre Dame, Paray, had the right of incorporation into this society. At the time of which we are writing, 1675, there were only ten members in all, and their work being in consequence very heavy, they had little time left for study. One of them was chaplain to the Visitation Convent and heard the nun's confessions. He was a man full of faith and piety, but in the archives of the Diocese of Autun he is described as "very zealous, but not very learned." It was this that caused such anguish to St. Margaret Mary, who had no one to guide her in the extraordinary path in which she was led by God—an anguish which caused her to beg God to send her a director. Her Superior told her to make herself known to the chaplain and some of the other priests of the town, who one and all attributed her visions to the work of the devil, or of her imagination, or even to hypocrisy. St. Teresa had suffered the same trial, and has told us that she considered learning a most necessary quality for a director of souls. Under these circumstances St. Margaret Mary again and again begged Our Lord to send her a guide. Once the answer came: "My daughter, am I not sufficient for thee?" but later on we read "He [Jesus Christ] promised me that He would send me His *faithful servant* and friend, who would teach me to know Him and abandon myself to Him without reserve."

Paray then counted three churches, including that of the Jesuit College and two religious houses of nuns—the famous Visitation Monastery and the Ursuline Convent which had been established in 1644 for the education of girls. This latter building was in the east of the town near the gate "de Charolles" and close to the Visitation Convent. Three of the Ursuline nuns came into more immediate contact with Father de la Colombière—Mother M. Magdalen de Vissuzenne, the Superior, who was succeeded by Mother M. Françoise de Montmorillon, and the Mother Assistant, Mother Rousseau des Anges, who corresponded with Father Claude during the whole of his sojourn in London.

The Convent of the Visitation had, in 1675, just celebrated its fiftieth year of existence. The Community numbered about forty, the nuns belonging, some to the nobility and some to the professional classes. The faults as well as the virtues of these companions of St. Margaret Mary all helped in the designs of God to show up her great virtue, and to give us an example also of what a transformation devotion to the Sacred Heart can make in souls. Mother M. Françoise de Saumaise was the Superior in 1675. It was in this Convent that Father de la Colombière's life-work was to be revealed to him, but we must follow him first in his first weeks as Rector. His zeal was exercised not in the town of Paray only, but in the outlying districts, especially at Charolles and in the Abbey of Bénissons-Dieu. There were three Convents at Charolles, one belonging to the Visitation Order, one to the Ursulines, the third to the Urbanists. It was in this latter Convent that St. Margaret Mary had made her First Communion and had passed some of the happiest days of her childhood. Father de la Colombière visited all these Convents, but was specially connected with the Abbey of Bénissons-Dieu, because there was an agreement between these Benedictine nuns and the Jesuits that the latter should give a mission every two years on the estate belonging to the Abbey. The year 1675 saw the commencement of these missions, and the duty was entrusted to Father de la Colombière and another priest from the Paray Community. The missionaries went from village to village and their work was greatly blessed. This work made Father de la Colombière well known to the Abbess, and when she died on May 21st, 1675, it was to him that the nuns turned to preach her funeral sermon. On this occasion Father de la Colombière speaks of the virtues of the Community and of the nuns in a way that can leave no doubt about the intimacy of his acquaintance with the Monastery. In this sermon the preacher profited by the circumstances to draw the hearts of his auditors to the Holy Eucharist. Madame de Nerestang's glory was in having sought God, and God only. "God is found in the Holy Eucharist, and it was there that the saintly Abbess sought Him."

Father de la Colombière was the support and consolation

of the Community in their bereavement. When the new Abbess, Madame d'Houel de Morainville, arrived, we find again that it was to Father de la Colombière that she turned. She was only twenty years of age and wrote rather a piteous letter to the Rector of Paray, begging him to direct her as to a retreat upon which she was about to enter. But he answered: "As I am so young, I have neither wisdom nor experience for the guidance of souls, and I dare not promise to help you on this occasion, for you have need of a very enlightened and virtuous man." So wrote the humble Jesuit—the Saints are ever lowly and diffident of their own powers! But he urged the young Abbess not to put off her retreat, and encouraged her to fear nothing, but to put all her trust in God's goodness. "Ask yourself," he writes, "the following questions: If all the religious were like I am, would God be greatly honoured? would He have spouses worthy of Him? Compare yourself with the holiest. Go through your vows, your rules; examine your virtues and your failings, the actions of each day and week." Then he urges her to devotion to the Blessed Sacrament: "Go sometimes alone before the Blessed Sacrament, and there ask Jesus Christ to have pity on you; present yourself before Him as a poor leper, weighed down with a thousand miseries, and seeing your state He will be touched by it. But above all things, I urge you to go often to Holy Communion." Shortly afterwards he wrote again to her: "I do not know what you mean by despair; one would think you had never heard of God and of His infinite mercy. I cannot go on forgiving such sentiments, and I beg of you to cultivate a great horror of them, and to remember that all your sins are nothing in comparison with your present want of confidence. Hope on to the end. I ask this of you with all the power you have given me over your soul. If you obey me on this point, I will answer for your conversion."

The fact that Father de la Colombière did not preach publicly in Paray until Whit-Sunday, June 2nd, 1675, is easily accounted for by these missions on the Bénissons-Dieu estate.

The Visitation Convent at Charolles had the privilege of having the Rector of Paray for their extraordinary confessor,

and he often went there to give conferences to the nuns, several of whom kept up a correspondence with him when he was in England. Father de la Colombière knew the Superior, Mère de Thélis, well, and sent her some English postulants from London.

Besides much work in Convents, many seculars of both sexes applied to Father de la Colombière for direction, as we shall see later.

But before and above all, it was clear that Father de la Colombière's first thought was for his own Community.

In 1619 the Marquise de la Magdeleine de Ragny, whose husband was the Governor of Charolais and whose son was the Bishop of Autun, asked for two Jesuits to preach a Lenten mission at Paray, which was then overrun with Huguenots. Père Jean de Villars, former confessor to St. Jane Frances de Chantal, was sent for the work together with a companion. The task of these two was a hard one. The Huguenots did all they could to poison the minds of the inhabitants against them, and succeeded so well that no one was found willing to give them hospitality. Under these circumstances the Jesuits sought and found shelter in a very small and badly built house. It was not long, however, before some of the better families, grateful for the good done by the priests, joined together to build four little houses the size and situation of which made them admirably suited to the needs of the Jesuits. The largest of them was turned into a chapel. The site of these four houses occupies the place now actually occupied by the church and choir of the Visitation Convent, and the courtyard where St. Margaret Mary had the vision of Seraphim, and the cell in which she breathed her last. Curiously enough the nuns and the Jesuits exchanged premises in 1632, the nuns taking the Jesuit house and priests establishing themselves in the house where the nuns had been first installed. Thus it was that one small Jesuit house was begun by Père de Villars, but it was dependent from 1619 to 1639 on the Roanne College, from 1639 to 1660 on the Lyons College, and then again came under Roanne. At first the Fathers taught catechism only to the Catholic children, but in 1637 a small College with only two professors

was opened. The Community then consisted of two priests, two scholastics, and one lay brother. From 1673 to 1680 three priests were in residence; a fourth was added in 1680, and this number remained for many years. When Father de la Colombière arrived at Paray, he found there three holy religious. Père Forest was a man gifted with remarkable eloquence, but one who gave himself up entirely to the service of the poor, except when obliged by obedience to preach; Père la Bounardière was known throughout the Province for his virtue and learning; while the third was Maître Jean Carrat, an old man of sixty-seven years of age, who, having finished his studies with distinction, had never been ordained on account of illness, but who had already spent twenty-five years teaching at Paray.

Father de la Colombière had been commissioned to preach as well as to govern this small Community, and however humble his post of Rector may have been, he set himself to his task with his whole heart in the spirit of obedience.

One of the ladies of Paray, Mademoiselle de Lyonne, wrote to Père Forest asking why a man of such merit as Father de la Colombière had been sent to Paray. She received this answer: "He has been sent on account of a privileged soul, who has need of his guidance." This soul, of course, was St. Margaret Mary, and this direction the life-work of Father Claude.

What did it matter that a chapel thirty-five feet long by thirty broad was sufficient to contain all the pupils as well as the masters of the Jesuit house at Paray? God's work is not restricted by any material circumstances. It is His work in souls that counts. And the work done by His grace in the hearts of His servants at Paray lives, and will live, as long as the world shall last.

CHAPTER IX

St. Margaret Mary: 1675-1676

“From henceforth I will give thee the title of the beloved disciple of My Heart.”—*Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary.*

LITTLE by little, from her tenderest years, Christ drew the heart of Margaret Mary closer and closer to Himself. More than once after her entrance into religion Our Lord told her that He was Himself her Father, her Spouse and her Guide. “See, My daughter, if thou canst find a father filled with love for an only son, who has ever taken such care of him and given him such marks of affection as I have given to thee, and am ready still to give to thee.” And, again: “I wish to be everything to thee”; and on yet another occasion: “Can a child perish in the arms of an Almighty Father?” Thus again and again in loving words Christ prepared the soul of His choice for the wonderful manifestations of love which He was about to bestow on her. Margaret Mary, even as a child, gave her whole heart to God. It is true that she wavered in her fidelity several times in those early years, but the Charity of Christ urged her ever onwards, and by the time she entered religion in May, 1671, she was already far advanced in the path of perfection. The various trials of her noviceship only made her cling closer to the Cross. “I will only say,” she writes, “that Christ has given me so great a love for the Cross that I cannot live a moment without suffering in silence, without consolation or relief, and without compassion from anybody. Happy should I be if I could die with the God of my soul, crushed beneath the cross of insult, humiliation, sorrow and contempt.”

She kept her Rule to the letter. We have seen how the nuns at Port-Royal rose up against their Bishop, and even against the teaching of the Vicar of Christ, in order to follow their own blind views and thus bring themselves before the notice of the world. Very different was Our Lord’s teaching to this humble



SAINT MARGARET MARY

(From a picture in the possession of the Visitation Nuns at Paray-le-Monial,
reproduced by the kind permission of the Rev. Mother Superior).

daughter of the Visitation: "I will adapt My graces to the spirit of the Rule, the will of thy Superiors and thy own weakness. Look with suspicion upon anything which draws thee from the exact observance of the Rule; it is My Will that thou shouldst prefer it before everything else. Moreover, I am content that thou follow the will of thy Superiors rather than Mine when they forbid thee to do what I have ordered thee." As to seeking the notice or approbation of the world, all Margaret Mary's instincts led her to hide herself more and more deeply in the Heart of Christ. Her motto might well have been: "My life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3).

How opposed, also, was the burning love of this saintly nun for Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist to the proud self-sufficiency which kept the religious of Port-Royal from Holy Communion year after year, and even when about to appear before their Judge. St. Margaret Mary seems as though unable to express herself when speaking of this Sacrament of love. When only four years old, we are told, she used to kneel before the altar in the chapel at Corcheval with joined hands and downcast eyes, thinking over the truths of religion which had been taught her and feeling her heart burn with love for Jesus Christ, whom she knew to be truly present. As the years went by, Holy Communion became her very life. On the eve of Communion she was so absorbed at the thought of the morrow's happiness that she could scarcely speak, and she tells us that after Communion she concealed herself as much as possible that she might learn in silence to love her Sovereign Lord. All her trials were carried to the Blessed Sacrament, and time after time Our Lord consoled, encouraged, or rebuked her, and she rose from her knees strengthened by her intercourse with Him Who lives upon our altars.

Humility, self-abnegation, and a perfect obedience, not only directly to Himself, but to all who had the slightest authority over her, seem to be the special virtues which God demanded of St. Margaret Mary, as a preparation for the revelations He was about to make to her. She made her profession on November 6th, 1672, and for the next two

years she received frequent communications from Our Lord. For the most part these visions referred to herself. She was shown the open Wound of the Sacred Side of Christ, and told that it was to be to her a place of refuge and a fountain of strength in all her difficulties. She saw the Sacred Heart as an ocean of light in which her own heart, as a tiny atom, was absorbed and lost. On another occasion Our Lord told her that He was the Book of Life, containing every lesson necessary for her soul; and yet again, that His Heart was an abyss of love wherein she might plunge herself to escape from every danger. Now she was led by her Saviour into the Garden of His Heart, and there told to rest and refresh herself at will; and yet again, she saw Him as He was in His Passion, crowned with thorns and covered with wounds and blood. Time after time Our Lord spoke to her. "My love reigns in suffering, triumphs in humility, and rejoices in unity," He said on one occasion; and one day when she was weighed down with the sense of her own weakness, she heard the whispered promise: "My daughter, thou shalt never lack help until My Heart lacks power."

Thus was St. Margaret Mary led from grace to grace by her Divine Master until, in 1674, Our Lord revealed Himself to her, now not so much for herself as for all others—she was to be the instrument by which the love of the Sacred Heart was to be brought home to millions of souls as long as the world shall last.

The first of these revelations took place in the spring of 1674. Jesus Christ showed Himself to her and allowed her to rest her head upon His Sacred Breast. The words she heard were as follows: "My Divine Heart is so full of love for men, and for thee in particular, that being unable to contain within Itself the flames of Its ardent charity, It must needs spread them abroad by thy means. My heart desires to manifest Itself to men, that they may be enriched with Its treasures which I show to thee, and which contain graces of sanctification and salvation necessary to withdraw souls from perdition. I have chosen thee, in spite of thy unworthiness and ignorance, for the accomplishment of this great design,

so that all may be done by Me.” Then it seemed to the Saint that Our Lord took her heart and placed it within His own, only returning it to her when He had enclosed within it a flame of His own love. It was on this occasion that He said to her: “Up to this time thou hast called thyself My slave; from henceforth I will give thee the title of the beloved disciple of My Heart.”

Another day she saw Our Lord resplendent with glory, with His Five Wounds brilliant as five suns. Flames issued on all sides from His Sacred Humanity, but especially from His adorable Breast, which resembled a furnace. In this He showed her His Sacred Heart, the living Source of those flames. This time Christ complained to His servant of the ingratitude of men, and begged her to receive Holy Communion as often as possible in reparation, especially on the first Friday of the month. On this occasion, too, Christ made known to her the devotion of the Holy Hour.

Our Lord had always told St. Margaret Mary to hide nothing from her Superiors, and in obedience she confided these visions and others to Mère de Saumaise, who required her to make them known to more than one priest. We know the result—one and all condemned her attraction for prayer, treated her as a visionary, and would not allow her to follow the inspirations with which she was favoured. All this was a terrible trial to the humble nun, and she turned to Our Lord for strength and consolation. In response Christ gently reassured her and promised her that He would soon send *one of His faithful servants to Paray*, to whom she was to disclose, as He should direct, all the secrets of His Sacred Heart which had been confided to her. Meantime, both her trials and her visions continued. The last revelation of the year 1674 took place on the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, December 27th. In this vision Our Lord made her understand that it was the great desire He has to be perfectly loved by men that had made Him manifest His Heart to them. He assured her that He took special pleasure in being honoured under the representation of the Heart of flesh, and that He desired such representations to become public, so that He would abun-

dantly pour forth the gifts of His love on all those who should honour His Heart, and that wherever the image of His Heart should be exposed for special veneration it would draw down every sort of blessing.

Thus closed the year 1674. The early spring of 1675 was the time chosen by Our Lord to bring together His two faithful servants, St. Margaret Mary and Father de la Colombière, who were to work in unison for the glory of His Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER X

In the Ways of God: 1675-1676

"He wished that we should be as brother and sister, sharing equally in these spiritual goods."—ST. MARGARET MARY.

IT is remarkable in the lives of the women Saints of the Church how frequently we find that God has brought them under the influence and direction of saintly men, who were themselves to merit the glory of canonization. It is sufficient to couple a few of these names together to see the truth of this statement. The name of St. Teresa is inseparably linked with that of St. John of the Cross. St. Jane Frances de Chantal tells us that under God she owed all she knew of the spiritual life to St. Francis of Sales. St. Clare was guided by St. Francis of Assisi, Blessed Louise de Marillac by St. Vincent of Paul, and so on. It is hardly surprising to find, then, that for a woman who was to do such great work for God's Church as St. Margaret Mary, God should have raised up a saintly director.

It was on or about February 15th, 1675, that Father de la Colombière paid his first visit to the Convent of the Visitation at Paray. He certainly lost no time in calling on the Superior, Mère de Saumaise, for he had only arrived in the town a day or two previously. Mère de Saumaise was evidently favourably impressed by the new Rector of the Jesuit house, and immediately asked him to come and give a conference to the nuns—a request which was complied with within a very few days. It was customary for cloistered nuns to assemble in the chapel for such conferences, where they occupy their seats in the choir, the priest taking his place at the grille which separates the choir from the sanctuary.

As Father de la Colombière spoke to the Community, St. Margaret Mary distinctly heard an interior voice saying to her: "This is he whom I have sent to thee." Later on she wrote: "Father de la Colombière asked about me of his own

accord, without our knowing each other at all, and at the same time I distinctly heard the words, 'This is he whom I have sent thee.'" It was during this conference that Father de la Colombière noticed the saintly demeanour of St. Margaret Mary and afterwards asked Mère de Saumaise who the Sister was who occupied a place in the choir which he pointed out. Mère de Saumaise told him who it was, but only spoke of her in a general way. Father de la Colombière, however, had been much struck by the holy religious, and told her Superior that she was certainly a chosen soul. Thus it is that this first conference given towards the end of February, 1675, marks the time and the place of the first meeting of these two apostles of the Sacred Heart. Our Lord thus appears to have inclined the director to believe in the divine origin of the revelations made to St. Margaret Mary, and at the same time to have encouraged the holy but naturally timid nun to give her whole confidence to him, who was pointed out to her as sent by God.

The Lent Ember days fell this year on the 6th, 8th, and 9th of March, within a fortnight, therefore, of Father de la Colombière's conference to the nuns. He had been named extraordinary confessor to the Community of the Visitation, and presented himself for that duty on one or other of these dates.

St. Margaret Mary went in her turn for confession, but in spite of her great desire to open her heart fully, refrained from doing so, as she had not received the permission of her Superior to do so. She contented herself with making an ordinary confession. Father de la Colombière, however, was not so easily satisfied. St. Margaret Mary gives an account of this interview: "I recognized immediately that Father de la Colombière was he who had been sent to me by God, for though we had never met, he kept me a very long time and spoke to me as if he knew all that was passing within me. But I would not open my heart to him then, and as he saw I wanted to withdraw, for fear of inconveniencing the Community, he told me that if I liked he would come and see me another time, so that I could speak to him at leisure in the

confessional. But my timidity made me fear all such communications, and I replied that not being my own mistress I would do what obedience prescribed. I withdrew after having stayed about an hour and a half.”*

Shortly after this Father de la Colombière went to Bénissons-Dieu to give the first mission there. Easter fell that year on April 14th, and the second mission took place after the feast, so that it was not until May that he was able to resume his acquaintance with St. Margaret Mary.

By this time the humble religious had not only received permission, but had been advised by Mère de Saumaise to confide fully in the guide God had sent her. She heard much of Father de la Colombière from Père Forest and Père la Baunardière, who had been in the noviceship with him. Reports also from the people of Paray were all in his favour. A few whom he directed could not speak sufficiently highly of him, and the success of his missions was known to all. God brings His plans to maturity slowly but always surely. He had Himself chosen a director for the disciple of His Heart, and the time was now come for every obstacle to their perfect freedom of intercourse to be removed. Works which are to prosper for God’s glory are rarely if ever exempt from the sign of the Cross. The work that Father de la Colombière and St. Margaret Mary were to do together was to bring untold graces to millions of souls, so we can hardly be surprised to find that they both suffered on account of it from the very first. No sooner had the latter received full permission from Mère de Saumaise to open her heart freely, than she experienced an extreme repugnance towards doing so. She accused herself of this repugnance as soon as she began her confession, and for all answer Father de la Colombière said he was very glad to give her an occasion of offering a sacrifice

* It may seem strange to us in these days to think that a nun required the permission of her Superior to open her heart to a confessor, but we must remember that the regulations for freedom of conscience were not so clearly marked down in the seventeenth century as they are now, and moreover that, in the case of St. Margaret Mary, Our Lord had told her to do nothing without the leave of her Superior. She therefore probably thought that this command included the present circumstances.

to God. At this her difficulty vanished, and she laid bare her soul before her confessor, concealing neither the good nor the ill. She told him all that passed within her, manifesting the graces bestowed upon her with the utmost simplicity. This confidence allowed Father de la Colombière to read the bottom of her heart. He paid her several visits, studied all that passed within her soul, examined the extraordinary operations of divine grace wrought in her, and watched and noted her virtues, her simplicity, humility and perfect obedience, and her great desire for self-abnegation. Sometimes he put these virtues to the proof and dealt harshly with his penitent, exercising her in obedience, for he knew that the devil has no power over the obedient. But proof, study and prayer, together with the lights God gave him for the direction of a soul so dear to Him, and who was to do such a glorious work for His Church, only convinced Father de la Colombière of the divine nature of the revelations vouchsafed to Margaret Mary. He told her that she was under no illusion, and that it was her duty to follow the inspirations of the spirit by which she was led. She has left us a record of this judgment, so consoling for himself and so glorious for her director: "He was not dismayed by my rustic manners, and after several conversations he reassured me and told me to continue in the path I was treading, strewn as it was with thorns and crosses. He forbade me to resist the spirit which led me, but to abandon myself completely to it, so that it might work its will in me. This gave steadfast peace to my soul." At another time she gives us further details of her intercourse with Father Claude. "He consoled me greatly, and assured me that I had nothing to fear, as long as I did not swerve from obedience. He told me to follow all the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and to abandon myself to Him, sacrificing and immolating myself to His good pleasure. He admired the great goodness of God in bearing with me so long in spite of so much resistance. He taught me how to esteem the gifts of God, and how to receive them with respect and humility. When I told Him that Our Lord seemed to pursue me so closely without any regard for time and place, and that I had very great difficulty in

praying vocally, he replied that I was to content myself with the vocal prayers which were of obligation, and to say the rosary too, but only when I was able. Having spoken to him of the more intimate union of love to which I was sometimes raised, he told me that it was a thing which should be a source of great humiliation to me, and should raise my heart in admiration of God's wonderful mercy towards me."

Father de la Colombière went further than reassuring St. Margaret Mary—he reassured her Superior, telling her that the Sister was walking in sure ways, for she walked in the path of humiliation, suffering and self-contempt, and that the devil never led people in this way.

Much other advice was given by the director to his penitent. And he commanded her to put into writing all she experienced in her soul.

Soon these two souls were to be bound together by closer ties than that of master and disciple. Christ wished them to be as brother and sister, sharing equally in His blessing; but before this he made them drink of the bitter chalice of contradiction.

Long before Our Lord had told St. Margaret Mary that all would turn to her greater humiliation. She paid dearly for the peace of soul she now enjoyed, and Father de la Colombière had his share in this trial. From March to June, 1675, especially in the month of May, the two had many interviews, and some of them were rather lengthy. The Community blamed them both. St. Margaret Mary tells us of her own humiliations and adds: "Father de la Colombière had much to suffer on account of me. It was said that I wanted to deceive him as I had deceived others. Others blamed the confessor openly and declared that he was no less a visionary than his penitent, and that it was a great weakness on his part to waste so much time, amusing himself with a person of so little intelligence. But," she adds, "the Father made no account of these remarks and did not cease to help me."

It was now that Father de la Colombière's strength of soul began to manifest itself. He had promised God neither to do nor omit anything through human respect in things which he

saw to be for the glory of God. It is certainly to the glory of God that one of His servants should sustain a soul who is immolated in His service. All the remarks of which he was the object, the little esteem in which he was held on account of his conduct regarding St. Margaret Mary, did not appear to affect him at all, and did not stop his work for one instant.

Our Lord had found in the holy Jesuit that faithful servant and friend on whose devotedness He could count for the accomplishment of His designs.

CHAPTER XI

The Choice of an Apostle: 1675-1676

“Let him [Father de la Colombière] remember that he is all-powerful who, distrusting himself, places his whole confidence in Me.”—*Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary.*

BOTH St. Margaret Mary and her saintly director practised the most solid virtues. Both were humble and mortified, both lovers of poverty, and both filled with a most ardent charity towards God and their neighbour. Father de la Colombière ranked first by the sublimity of his priesthood, but St. Margaret Mary outstripped him in the intimacy of her union with the Sacred Heart. Our Lord wished to let them share equally in the gifts of His love, and made His will known to St. Margaret Mary. This is the account she gives of this vision: “On one occasion when Father de la Colombière came to say Mass in our chapel, Our Lord vouchsafed to give us both great graces. As I approached the altar to receive Holy Communion, He showed me His Divine Heart as a burning furnace, and at the same time I saw two other hearts on the point of uniting themselves to His. At the same time I heard these words: ‘It is thus that My love will unite these three hearts for ever.’ After this He showed me clearly that this union was to be for the glory of His Sacred Heart, whose treasures He bade me discover to Father de la Colombière, so that he should make them known to all, and for this end He wished us to be as brother and sister, sharing equally in these spiritual goods. I then represented to Him my poverty and the great inequality there was between a man of such great virtue and a wretched sinner like myself. At this Jesus said to me: ‘The infinite riches of My Heart will supply for everything and make all equal. Tell him this simply and without fear.’” St. Margaret Mary then goes on to tell us how she obeyed Our Lord’s command and spoke to Father de la Colombière on the first opportunity. The result was exactly what we should have expected, knowing

the humility of both. Father de la Colombière was in his turn overwhelmed with confusion at the thought of his unworthiness. The two seem to have vied with each other as to who should be the most humble. St. Margaret Mary tells us that no sermon ever affected her more than the profound humility with which her director received the message she gave him from our Lord.

It was immediately after the institution of the Blessed Sacrament that Our Lord made this prayer to His Eternal Father: "That they may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us" (St. John xvii. 21). And it was just when Father de la Colombière had received the Holy Eucharist, and had given the Bread of Life to St. Margaret Mary, that Christ chose to open His Heart to His servants that they might be for ever united in Him and made one in Him.

These two souls, intimately united with the Sacred Heart, were to share in the sentiments of that Heart towards God and man; their will would henceforth be His, their one desire to immolate themselves for His glory; their great happiness to suffer, work, and pray for the salvation of souls. Mutually would they urge each other on to greater and greater self-immolation. And so these two, drawing their heroism from that which is the source of holiness, have given to the world an example of the way in which men and women may strive to return their Redeemer love for love.

This vision of the union of the Sacred Heart with that of His two disciples was a direct preparation for the mission that was now to be entrusted to them. Their intimacy with Christ was to enkindle the desire of His intimate love in countless souls, and to urge them on to turn to His Heart as an abyss of love and mercy. St. Margaret Mary, to whom Our Lord vouchsafed to show Himself so often, was to make known the marvels of His love to her director. And the priest, after having tried and proved the humble nun and tested her revelations, by the touchstone of revealed truth, was to reassure her in God's name and say to her: "It is truly the Lord who speaks to you."

By the holiness of his life Father de la Colombière had prepared people to incline before this judgment. The principles of theology and his own experience of supernatural things, coupled with the light of the Holy Spirit, had given him a sure means of coming to the decision, and the time was now ripe in the designs of God for the great revelation, which was to be the crowning and completion of all that had gone before. The account of this vision to St. Margaret Mary must be given in full.

“As I was before the Blessed Sacrament on a day during the Octave of Corpus Christi, 1675 [probably Sunday, June 16th], I received from God most special graces of His love. I felt moved with the desire of making Him some return and giving Him love for love, and He said to me: ‘Thou canst not make Me a more acceptable return of love than by doing what I have so often asked of thee!’ Then, showing me His Divine Heart, He said: ‘Behold this Heart which has so loved men that It has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming Itself to prove to them Its love. In return, I receive from the greater number nothing but ingratitude, contempt, irreverence, sacrilege, and coldness in this Sacrament of My love. But what I feel still more is that there are hearts consecrated to Me who use Me thus. Therefore I ask of thee that the first Friday after the Octave of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament shall be kept as a special Festival in honour of My Heart, to make reparation for all the indignities offered to It, and as a Communion day, in order to atone for the unworthy treatment It has received when exposed upon the altars. I also promise that My Heart shall shed in abundance the influence of Its divine love on all those who shall thus honour It or cause It to be so honoured.’”

Casting herself at Our Lord’s Feet, the Saint exclaimed: “But, my Lord, to whom dost Thou address Thyself? To a weak creature, a poor sinner, whose unworthiness will be an obstacle to the accomplishment of Thy designs? Thou hast so many generous souls to do Thy work.” And Our Lord replied: “Dost thou not know that I choose the weakest subjects to confound the strong, and that My power is most frequently shown in those who are humble and poor of spirit,

so that they can attribute nothing to themselves?" "Then, give me, Lord, the means to do as Thou wilt," prayed St. Margaret Mary, and Our Lord answered her: "Go to My servant, Father Claude de la Colombière, and tell him from Me to do all in his power to establish this devotion and give this pleasure to My Heart. Let him not be discouraged by the difficulties he will meet, for there will be many, but let him remember that he is all-powerful who, distrusting himself, places his whole confidence in Me."

St. Margaret Mary, with the permission of her Superior, lost no time in giving Father de la Colombière a faithful account of all that had passed between herself and her Divine Master. He told her to commit the whole to writing, and to give the manuscript to him, so that he might study it at leisure. Father de la Colombière was not one of those credulous minds who believe everything without sufficient proof. But he recalled the lights he had received from Heaven at his first meeting with St. Margaret Mary; he remembered the outpourings of his own heart and the graces He had received himself from the Heart of Christ during his own retreat, seven or eight months previously. Not a month had elapsed since he had been told that his heart and the heart of his humble penitent were united for ever to the Sacred Heart; all this and the sanctity of St. Margaret Mary, together with the wonderful effects her visions had upon her, left him no doubt of the truth of what was now made known to him.

To hesitate in believing such proofs would have been an unreasonable incredulity and a culpable negligence, rising from the fear of impending difficulties. He conformed his sentiments to those of the Heart of Jesus, told St. Margaret Mary to obey the voice of her Divine Master, and he determined to obey it himself in the first place.

Thus it was that on June 21st, 1675, the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, the day chosen by Our Lord for the Feast of Reparation in honour of His Sacred Heart, Father de la Colombière and St. Margaret Mary consecrated themselves to Him and offered themselves to suffer all things for the realization of His designs.

In a short account of Mère de Saumaise written after her death we find these words: "That which finally convinced her of the truth of God's gifts to this soul [St. Margaret Mary] was the opinion of Father de la Colombière, S.J., whose virtue, as everyone knows, equalled his learning, and who has since died in the odour of sanctity. This great religious examined the question thoroughly, and was so penetrated with esteem and veneration for her, that from that time he always looked upon her as a Saint, and wished for a special place in her prayers."

That Father de la Colombière was officially chosen by Christ for the establishment of the devotion to His Sacred Heart is an historical fact which was affirmed many times by St. Margaret Mary. The "faithful servant" who was to be sent to her is Father de la Colombière. In a letter to Père Croiset, S.J., she writes: "He [Christ] made use of the good Father de la Colombière to begin this devotion to His adorable Heart." Another letter says: "I acknowledge that in order to spread devotion to the Sacred Heart I made it known in the first place to this good Father, as I had been told to do so by Our Lord, Who gave him, just at this time, greater graces than he had before received." Another time she writes: "I felt myself tormented and urged to make known this Divine Heart, without being able to find the means to do this, until Father de la Colombière was sent to me, and I could resist no longer. I was obliged in spite of myself to tell him all I had concealed with so much care, because he had been chosen to carry out this great design of God, but I confess I was unable to express all that was revealed to me, for it was an abyss of God's mercy."

In these letters we have the chief proofs that Father de la Colombière's mission was from God. His greatest glory is to have been elected and specially named by Jesus Christ to be the first to work at "giving Him this pleasure."

The reiterated words of St. Margaret Mary and of other of his contemporaries authorize us in applying to Father de la Colombière what Pius IX. wrote (of our Lord's will) in regard to St. Margaret Mary in the Brief of her Beatification: "He

wished this work to be confided to him"—*Ac velle se hujus rei curam ipsi demandatam.*

Father de la Colombière was St. Margaret Mary's first conquest towards the special worship Our Lord desired to be paid to His Sacred Heart. On account of this conquest, and still more on account of the mission she herself received directly from Christ, St. Margaret Mary is the first and principal apostle of the Sacred Heart. Father de la Colombière was the first to make known this devotion publicly. His mission was to "make known and publish everywhere the treasures to be found in the Sacred Heart of Our Lord."

All the details of the honour to be given to the Sacred Heart were told to him: the Holy Hour, frequent Communion, the devotion of the first Friday, the honour to be paid to His image, and, moreover, the fact that hearts were to be gained to the Divine Heart, not by force, but by love. Thus, both the theory and the practice of the devotion were contained in the mission given to Father de la Colombière, and no sooner had he consecrated himself entirely to the Divine Heart than he applied himself with all his strength to realize the desires of that Heart, and to enkindle all souls with the fire of His love. For nearly seven years—all that was left to him of life—in Paray, in London, and in Lyons, everywhere, he did all he possibly could to establish this devotion. During this time, and indeed until two years after the death of Father de la Colombière, St. Margaret Mary could do nothing herself towards propagating public devotion to the Sacred Heart: it was only when, in 1684, she was named Mistress of Novices that she was able to influence others in the work so dear to her. Her humility led her to speak of the manifestations of Our Lord as though she had learnt of them from her director. When after his death Father de la Colombière's writings were published, St. Margaret Mary alludes to them in these words: "We culled this devotion from the 'Retreat' of Father de la Colombière."

For seven years, then, the holy Jesuit sowed the good seed in the hearts of all with whom he came in contact, and during the last five years of her life St. Margaret Mary tended that

seed until it blossomed forth into a vigorous plant, and the worship of the Sacred Heart grew and spread, sheltering and shielding the souls of men from the attacks of the enemy.

Thus it is that the two names of Margaret Mary and Claude de la Colombière are for ever united, bound by the closest of all ties—the love of the Heart of Christ.

The effects of this devotion were admirably summed up by Pope Leo XIII. when addressing the delegates of the Apostleship in 1893: "According to what Jesus Christ revealed to St. Margaret Mary, devotion to the Sacred Heart was pre-ordained by God to cure the chief wound of modern society—selfishness. This selfishness which is the idolatry of self, or the cult of one's own sensuality and one's own pride; this selfishness which, in substituting self for God and placing oneself above the rest of humanity, turns all things to self and usurps all that belongs by right to God and the Church, and to man individually and socially; this selfishness which shatters all the ties of Christian and social life, which fights at once against religion and morality, authority and faith, as well as against family rights. Now, can there be a better means of combating this selfishness than the infinite power of this flame of love, which, springing from the Heart of Jesus, enkindles the whole world by infusing into the deadness of pagan society a new life both moral and civil? 'I am come to set fire upon earth.' . . . But things are preserved only by their generating principles. And as the principle of all Christian society was the love of the Divine Heart, so also it must be restored by this same Divine love."

CHAPTER XII

Apostolic Work in Paray: 1675-1676

"You have reason to envy the privilege I have in being able to urge others to serve God; but you know one's own heart must first be full of love so as to be able to touch other hearts."—*Letter of Father de la Colombière.*

AS we have already seen, Father de la Colombière's first missionary work was on the estate belonging to the Abbey of Bénissons-Dieu. The Visitation Convent at Charolles also received visits from the Rector of Paray, as well as several other Convents. But it is of his work in Paray-le-Monial itself that we must now give some account. Father de la Colombière's first appearance in the pulpit at Paray was on the Feast of Pentecost, 1675. His sermon made a profound impression on his auditors, and it was on this occasion that his real work in the town began. His intellectual gifts, his personal distinction, and the high esteem in which the people held the tutor of Colbert's sons, all helped to give a greater weight to his authority. By August he had gained so much ascendancy over the people that he was able to erect a Congregation, composed of the nobles and middle-class alike, and he placed it under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin. For a year Father de la Colombière himself directed this Congregation, and all its members held him in the highest esteem, affection, and respect. After he had left Paray for London, the members wrote him a letter which unfortunately has not come down to us, but the answer has been preserved, and shows us at once the difficulties he had had to contend with in erecting the Congregation and the devotedness he evinced towards it:

"I hear with great joy that your fervour does not diminish. I hope He Who has drawn you together will not allow you to relax from that piety which edified me so greatly during the year I passed among you. Your letter recalls to my mind the zeal you showed from the beginning in ordering all things

so that there might be no falling off afterwards. I cannot but admire the facility I found in an enterprise which so many people judged impossible of realization. I was sure that it was the work of God, and that by it He wished to open the way to many chosen souls. In order to understand how much this thought consoled me, you would have to know how dear your interests are to me, and how much I have your eternal welfare at heart. Jesus Christ, to Whom I commend you daily, knows the greatness of my affection for you and how ardently I wish you every blessing. I foresee with extreme pleasure that the graces you will receive in the service of God and His Holy Mother will be extended to your families and even to your posterity, and that in Heaven you will receive the reward of much good that will be done in the future through the good example you will leave to your successors. This is why I beseech you, Gentlemen, by the love of Jesus Christ and that of Our Holy Mother, to persevere in the happy dispositions in which you now are, and even to augment them if possible by your assiduity in the observance of the rules that God inspired you to make. In God's Holy Name, preserve your Congregation in such a state that those who enter it may find in it an infallible means of salvation, and that your children may one day find their sanctification in imitating you. Do not let it be said that those who founded the Congregation were the first to relax. On the contrary, be so faithful in keeping even the smallest rules, and so generous in correcting the small abuses which may creep in with time, that those who come after you may have nothing to reform, and that if they fall into negligence, they may blush at the thought of your fervour. It is certain that it rests with you to become a source of salvation to many and the cause of many virtues that will be practised after your death; for if, during the time you belong to the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin, you are seen to fly from all that could dishonour her; if you always make an open profession of your horror of all that is against your rules; if you distinguish yourselves, as in the past, by the flight of all bad company, of quarrels and of idleness, and by the practice of a perfect unanimity of purpose, by the reception of

the Sacraments, compassion towards the poor, and your care to preserve peace in your families; if, I say, people are once persuaded by your conduct that such virtues are essential to a member of the *congregation*, they will join you with the firm resolution to become like you, and it will be enough to be of your number to engage all to live like Christians. Render, then, this service to God. Who can say what your reward will be? It will surpass all that I could say of it. But I dare affirm that it will not surpass my desires, for with all my heart I pray that it may equal that of the Saints. I humbly recommend myself to your prayers, and I greet you in the Heart of Jesus Christ and in that of our Queen. I am, and wish always to be, your very humble servant in Our Lord."

This letter touched the hearts of the members of the Congregation; they resolved to have it printed, so that it might remain to them as a title of honour and a rule of life.

In some way Father de la Colombière heard of this and he wrote at once to his friend Monsieur Bouillet, the parish priest of Paray: "The Members of the Congregation will surely have enough sense not to print the miserable letter I wrote them. But I hope that if they found in it anything capable of inflaming their love for Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, they will imprint the same in their hearts and never forget it."

Another Congregation had been formed among the pupils of the Jesuit College. On every feast of Our Lady the boys might be seen with their masters forming part of a procession of the Blessed Sacrament with great reverence and devotion. This was the nursery which later supplied members for the larger Congregation.

Father de la Colombière's name must always remain dear to the poor of Paray. He did much to establish on a better footing the hospital, which was small and very poor. Later, on his return from England, he found the people of Paray very well disposed towards this charity, and was able to assist it more effectually. The following notice may still be read at the head of the list of the rules of the hospital: "It was only in 1679, and owing to the efforts of the Reverend Father

de la Colombière, of the Society of Jesus, that the Magistrates of this town, whose names are Jean Bouillet, parish priest of Paray, and Palamède Baudinot, Lord of Selorre, having met in the house of Monsieur Bouillet—the solicitor, on the first day of May, began a fund for the relief of the sick-poor.” Many donations were given to the hospital at this time, and nearly all were from the hands of the friends and penitents of Father de la Colombière. A few years after his death, some nursing Sisters from Beaune came to take charge of this hospital. It was wonderfully blessed by God and managed to subsist all through the days of the Revolution. The hospital now joins the Jesuit house at Paray which is known as the *Maison de la Colombière*, and here rests the body of Claude de la Colombière, protecting, as it were in death, as he did in life, the interests of the poor of Paray.

Father de la Colombière was on very friendly terms with all the clergy in Paray. Monsieur Bouillet, the parish priest, seems to have contracted an intimate friendship with him, which resulted in much good, for though the Jesuit was twelve years his junior, Monsieur Bouillet seems to have turned to him for advice and guidance, and to have been helped by the young religious to overcome certain defects in his character which were somewhat of an obstacle to his work. The Jesuits were counted upon to preach three times a week during Advent and Lent in the Church of St. Nicholas. During the Advent of 1675 and the Lent of 1676 there was no one free to fulfil this duty but the Rector. In this way he saw a great deal of Monsieur Bouillet, and by helping to sanctify the shepherd he was indirectly leading the flock to salvation. Later on, when Father de la Colombière was at St. James’s Court, he wrote to his friend as follows: “You fear that the loss of your letters should have affected our friendship. But, my dear friend, what are you thinking of? Friendships which have their root in Jesus Christ are unalterable, and I assure you that neither distance nor silence can ever change me towards you. On the contrary, it seems to me that I grow daily in affection for my friends. The Court will never efface them from my mind or my heart, and I remember daily at the altar several

people who may think that I have forgotten them. I recommend to your zeal all the souls God has entrusted to you. But do not forget your own which is so dear to me, and which ought to be dearer to you than all the rest."

The Ursuline Convent at Paray shared largely in the apostolic work of Father de la Colombière. He often went there to preach. One of these sermons was the means, as we shall see hereafter, of converting Mademoiselle de Lyonne to so fervent a life that she afterwards became one of the most holy of all the souls guided by him. Often the holy Jesuit would preach to the children as well as to the Community. One of the pupils, Peronne-Rosalie Marque de Farges, had the happiness of being prepared by him for her First Communion. He heard her confession and spoke to her so persuasively that she there and then made up her mind to give herself entirely to God. She became an excellent religious in the Visitation Convent at Paray.

It was not St. Margaret Mary only who profited by the visits of Father de la Colombière to the Convent of the Visitation. He considered that the rule given by St. Francis of Sales to St. Jane Frances de Chantal and her daughters was one very calculated to lead souls to perfection. On one occasion he wrote: "I have found among your Sisters persons of such high sanctity that I have never known greater virtue."

Officially, Father de la Colombière was the extraordinary confessor to the Community, but he often went to the Convent to give conferences to the religious and heard the confessions of several amongst them more often than merely at Ember-tide. Mère de Saumaise, the Superior, consulted him frequently, both for her own soul and for the guidance of St. Margaret Mary. Others consulted him in their spiritual trials. Among these Sister Maria Catherine Carme du Chailoux may be mentioned. She was grievously harassed by interior trials, and opened her heart to Father de la Colombière, who helped and strengthened her, but he was recalled from Paray too soon to see this soul established in peace. Sister Marie-Anne Cordier had also the happiness of being directed by him. She made a general confession, and received

such light and grace that she entirely changed her manner of life, and strove to die to all that was not God. Father de la Colombière thought a great deal of this soul and urged her to the highest perfection. She wrote down the advice she received from him and followed it faithfully till her death.

Thus it was that the holy Jesuit made himself, in the words of St. Paul, "all things to all men, that he might gain all to Christ." Gradually the Convent of the Visitation at Paray developed into a chosen sanctuary of faithful virgins, but its real glory does not consist in never having sheltered any but perfect souls—nor even in having been the home of one so perfect as St. Margaret Mary—but rather in the fact that it was chosen by God to be a proof to all other Communities, whether perfect or imperfect, of the transforming power of devotion to the Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER XIII

A Director of Souls

“Place all your confidence in God and look to Him for everything, and not to creatures, not even to your directors whoever they may be, for they can do nothing without God, and He can do everything without them.”—
FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

IT did not take the people of Paray long to realize that in the Rector of the Jesuit house they could find a prudent confessor, an enlightened director, and a faithful friend. Many of them, both men and women, flocked to his confessional, and deep was the regret when, after a short period of eighteen months, he was removed from their midst.

The history of one of these penitents of Father de la Colombière has come down to us in detail, and from it we can gather both the strength and the sweetness with which he guided souls.

Marie de Reclesnes de Lyonne was born in Paray, 1645. She was of noble parentage. From her earliest childhood she had a pronounced dislike for Convents and nearly fainted when brought face to face with a grille. Nevertheless, she was only four years old when, passing one day by the Visitation Convent with her grandmother, she said: “There’s a beautiful house! I shall die there.” As she grew up her beauty became quite remarkable and she was the centre of a considerable amount of admiration. The sons of many of the best families in Paray, Charolles, and Lyons hoped to obtain her hand in marriage. Dearly as she loved the world, she felt the emptiness of its pleasures, and though everything seemed to smile on her, she could never make up her mind to consent to any of the brilliant matches proposed to her. On the other hand, she had not the slightest idea of renouncing the world and entering the cloister. It was her liberty she loved, and her liberty she was determined at all costs to keep. And yet all the time she felt vaguely drawn to something higher, though she knew not what. On the advice of Père Papon, S.J., she gave up novel-reading and took to studying the “Imitation of Christ”; by his advice,

also, she began to practise works of charity and made efforts to overcome her pride. No lightest breath of scandal ever for one moment tarnished her good name.

In these dispositions Mademoiselle de Lyonne used sometimes to visit the chapel at the Visitation Convent, to ask for a greater knowledge of God through the intercession of St. Francis of Sales. It seemed to her that on one of these occasions God promised to send her someone who would teach her how to serve Him according to His Will. This promise consoled her greatly. It was soon realized. She heard Father de la Colombière preach for the first time on June 2nd, 1675. Grace moved her heart, but it was not until August 28th, the Feast of St. Augustine, that it triumphed in her soul. She happened to be at some pleasure party on the afternoon of August 28th, when she heard the bell of the Ursuline Convent ringing for the sermon. She felt interiorly urged to turn to her friends and say: "We should do much better in going to listen to the sermon than in staying here to amuse ourselves." The friends made no objection and followed Mademoiselle de Lyonne to the Convent chapel. Father de la Colombière was preaching on the Saint of the day and used these well-known words: "O Truth and Beauty, ever ancient! ever new! Too late have I known Thee! Too late have I loved Thee!" Mademoiselle de Lyonne was touched to the heart. Although she had not the excesses of St. Augustine to deplore, she had been negligent. She was a child of the Church, yet how little had she understood its spirit and her duties! She resolved to give her complete confidence to Father de la Colombière, convinced that he was the guide who had been promised to her.

No sooner had the saintly Jesuit become acquainted with her conscience than he realized that he was dealing with a soul whom God had preserved from the world in order to conquer it completely to His love. He did not hesitate to tell Mère de Saumaise that there was something angelic about Mademoiselle de Lyonne, and that she had never lost her baptismal innocence. He led her on towards perfection, but with the utmost caution and prudence. He avoided all restraint to

if you were ungrateful and set any bounds to the love with which you should serve your Benefactor. It is undoubtedly true that I can never understand God's goodness and mercy towards you. It is a greater miracle than to raise the dead. I wish you could see how far I think your gratitude ought to go. I cannot express it."

What a stimulus for a great and generous soul ! The director knew her well and went further. "Mademoiselle," he wrote, "all that God has so far done for you is little or nothing in comparison with what He intends to do for you. In the name of Jesus Christ, do not oppose His designs. Let Him act, I beg of you. Aid Him with all your strength. Be faithful to His inspirations, and you will soon see the admirable effects of your docility. What misery if you put obstacles to His Will for you. I confess that I should find it difficult to console myself about it. But I hardly fear this misfortune. Jesus Christ loves you too well not to finish the work He has begun in you, and you are too generous not to desire to do your part."

In the following year Mademoiselle de Lyonne consulted Father de la Colombière about some difficulties concerning her share in the family fortune. "You are right," he writes; "think no more of this money, but leave everything to your mother's discretion. Let her dispose of both capital and interest as she likes. You say the worst thing that can happen to you would be to be reduced to poverty, especially if you were to fall ill; but for my part, I tell you that that would be the best thing that could happen to a soul who loves God, and who understands what an honour it is to resemble Jesus Christ."

This letter shows to what a degree of virtue Mademoiselle de Lyonne must have already attained.

Father de la Colombière's departure for England was a terrible blow to her. She wrote: "I am heart-broken for many reasons which I cannot tell you now." "Why can you not?" was the prompt answer. "You can write freely to me if you wish to do so, but say no more about my departure, nor your sorrow, because it is a sorrow I cannot approve. Your heart should feel no other sorrow but that of having

offended God." He wrote often to her as to a soul of whom he hoped great things for the glory of God. But in later life she sacrificed his letters one by one, giving them to those who wanted a souvenir of her holy director. Only a few have come down to us. In these we see how he urged her to obey her mother, as though she had made a vow to do so; she was to be full of kindness towards her brothers and sisters, and only to give in charity what her mother thought fit.

It was whilst Father de la Colombière was in London that an event took place which had a great influence on the future life of Mademoiselle de Lyonne. She was staying at Lyons. One morning when she woke she distinctly saw a man kneeling in her room with his hands joined and a look of great suffering on his face. It was a gentleman of Charolais, who had long sought her hand in marriage, but who had been recently killed in a duel. He spoke to her clearly and slowly. "How great God is! How holy He is! There is nothing small in His eyes. All is weighed—all is rewarded or punished." "Have you obtained mercy?" she asked. "Yes, my charity towards the poor has saved me." We do not know how the interview continued, but the reality of the apparition was undeniably proved. Mademoiselle de Lyonne until that day was extremely beautiful. When she went to her mother after this conversation, she looked more than ten years older. Her beauty had disappeared and never returned.

The complete liberty she enjoyed in regard to her devotions and her good works persuaded her that she could do far more good in the world than in religion. But God judged otherwise. Our Lord made known to St. Margaret Mary that he had chosen this soul for His Spouse. Immediately this was transmitted to Father de la Colombière, who wrote to Mademoiselle de Lyonne and told her to go and see St. Margaret Mary. She obeyed, and was so moved by her words that she promised to follow her advice in everything except on the subject of religious life. Her dislike of this state of life was stronger than ever. One day her director sent her a letter beginning with these words: "My dear child, you must die to yourself." She at once concluded that he was going to tell her to enter a

Convent, and nearly fainted. No one could console her. Her mother could not imagine the cause of her distress. About two o'clock in the afternoon a friend called at the house and found the whole family still fasting and most of them in tears. She asked what was the matter, and Mademoiselle de Lyonne gave her the letter to read. There was no mention of religious life in it, so peace was restored.

Another time St. Margaret Mary sent for her, and Mademoiselle de Lyonne presented herself at the parlour, but would not go near the grille. She stood at the door and enquired why she had been sent for. St. Margaret Mary asked her to say the Thirty Days' prayer for her intention. She consented, and said to herself: "The intention is that I may become a nun. But I shall catch her well. *My* intention will be that I may never be one." No sooner were the thirty days over than Our Lord reiterated His desire to St. Margaret Mary. At this time the news reached Father de la Colombière at St. Symphorien, where he had been ordered by the doctors for his health. He wrote at once to Mademoiselle de Lyonne: "You must now give your Spouse the last, or rather the first, real proof of your love, for we never really prove we love Jesus Christ until we have given Him all we can give Him. I rejoice with you in His mercy towards you, inasmuch as He calls you to His service, and of the desire He has to make you entirely His own. In His turn He will give Himself to you without reserve, and He is a Treasure no one can deserve. It makes our happiness even in this life equal that of the Angels."

She understood what was meant and thought she would sooner die. But the same day she started for St. Symphorien with her brother to receive her sentence from the lips of her director. Father de la Colombière was charmed with her obedience. She knelt before him and acknowledged that in spite of all her fears she was ready to obey him in all things. "My child, if Jesus Christ wants you for His spouse, will you refuse Him?" "Father!" "Will you refuse this offer? Can you refuse Jesus Christ? God wishes it." At that instant all her fear and trouble vanished. She was filled with

joy and peace. Overflowing with consolation, she promised to consecrate herself to God.

Madame de Lyonne was a good Catholic, but she was also a mother, and her daughter was the only one of her children who remained to her. Her affections triumphed over her faith, and she declared she would never consent to her daughter entering a Convent. Ever since Marie had led a devout life she had never contradicted her: "Let her go on leading that life without leaving her mother," she said. She complained to Father de la Colombière and reminded him that before his advice had been very different. This drew forth the following humble letter: "I am taking the liberty of writing this note, to beg you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to forgive me for the sorrow I am causing you. I cannot deceive a person who has confidence in me, without going against my conscience and rendering myself culpable before God of a crime which I have no intention of adding to my other infidelities. But as I have had no other interest or view in end but the glory of Jesus Christ, if my counsels are not followed I shall not be in the least disturbed. It will not be difficult for me, in that case, to believe that I have made a mistake in thinking that you would please God by sacrificing such a good daughter to Him. Do reflect well on all the reasons which prevent you from giving your consent. You would not, perhaps, have found them so persuasive if she had been about to marry and settle a hundred miles away, even if in that case you could not live with her, nor see her more than once a year. After your death, your daughter may not be as strong as she is now, and will certainly find it more difficult to accustom herself to religious life. And besides all this there will then be no sacrifice for you in her entering a Convent, and less merit for her, as she will not have the sorrow of leaving you. You think it strange that she should embrace a state of life for which she has no inclination. It seems to me that we never have much inclination for the Cross. I know I had a terrible aversion to religious life when I entered the Society, and I think there are few people who do not experience this repugnance, except those who enter very young and whom God saves

from the world because they would not have sufficient strength to overcome its difficulties. Our Lord gives us the light necessary to know His Will and the strength to accomplish it. If you consent to give up your daughter, you will do something that will probably be of more value than anything you have done in your life. Perhaps it would efface all the sins of your life. Remember that you will never again have such an opportunity of gaining the Heart of God, and that you may lose a treasure which you can never regain. It seems to me that God does you a great honour in asking for your daughter. You would give her to a creature, and you refuse her to Him Who created you and Who will judge you, sooner than you perhaps think!

“Adieu, Madam. I pray God that you may do in this what best pleases Him, whatever it is. I hope this for the love of your soul, which is very dear to me, and which I should like to see as pleasing to Our Lord as that of the greatest Saint.”

In spite of this letter Madame de Lyonne refused her consent, and her daughter was not too sorry at being kept in the world against her will, as her repugnances had returned more violently than ever. She did not, however, discontinue her persuasions to her mother. Things went on in this way for nearly a year; Madame de Lyonne persisted in her refusal, and her daughter had not enough courage to leave home without her consent.

In September, 1679, Father de la Colombière wrote to her: “I am not in the least surprised at your difficulties. The devil is always displeased at our taking steps for our sanctification and to please God. But if only you have courage and resolution, He Who calls you will make all things easy for you and give you strength to conquer. I can pardon your tears and your tenderness towards your mother, but that does not prevent me from seeing in these very things a grave reason for your separation; for if you were God’s as perfectly as He desires you should be, your heart would not suffer so much at the mere thought of leaving her. This attachment, however innocent, excites the jealousy of God, and must be sacrificed.”

One morning, about March 1st, 1680, St. Margaret Mary

went to her Superior, Mother Greyfié, and said: "Mother, Our Lord must absolutely have this soul. He said to me: 'I must have her at any price.'" Mother Greyfié sent instantly for Mademoiselle de Lyonne, who was hearing Mass in the Convent chapel. The struggle in her soul recommenced, but she went to the parlour. Mother Greyfié and St. Margaret Mary told her she must enter at once without returning to her mother. It was God's Will. The struggle increased. She had a friend with her to whom she confessed that if the fire of Purgatory was open before her, she would plunge herself into it rather than enter the Convent. Nevertheless, grace triumphed at last, and finally the Convent doors closed behind her. She took the habit on May 1st after two months' postulanship. At first her only consolation was the thought that she would not survive a fortnight. She lived forty-five years as a religious.

As soon as Father de la Colombière heard of these events, he wrote to his penitent: "I rejoice with you that Our Lord has opened the doors of His house to you. I feel sure that at the same time He opened for you His Sacred Heart, so that you may have your place among the many holy souls who dwell therein. Bless Him with all your heart that He has drawn you to Himself, the more so because it has been with so much difficulty. Have confidence in Our Lord, both for yourself and for your mother. You will see, if you do not fail in courage, that He will turn all things for the best for both of you, and that soon a great peace will make you forget the storm. Begin your postulanship at once if you have not already begun it. You must not defer a single moment longer than you can help to give Jesus Christ the joy of possessing you entirely, and yourself the honour of being wholly His. Let Him see that you know how to love Him in crosses as in consolations, and that the hard way of the Saints does not frighten you. I have never been so happy about you as since you have begun to suffer. The continual consolations which you enjoyed made me a little afraid for you. But now I see that God prepared you by them for the trials you undergo at present."

Thus encouraged, Mademoiselle de Lyonne began with courage to acquire the virtues of the religious life. She was faithful to the smallest observance, following thus in the footsteps of the two friends under whose influence she had chiefly come.

From the day of her profession Sister Marie Rosalie was consoled by the complete change in her mother's attitude towards her. Father de la Colombière had predicted this; he congratulated her upon it and wrote her the following beautiful lines: "How good our God is, my dear Sister! He is touched by our sorrows and does not permit them to last for ever. He takes pleasure in proving our love for a time because He sees that these trials purify us and make us worthy to receive greater graces. But He adapts Himself to our weakness; one would almost think He suffered with us, so anxious is He to relieve us. May He be eternally blessed and praised by all His creatures. As for us, my dear Sister, let us continue to love Him without reserve, and daily more and more. We shall receive many other proofs of His goodness! All that we have experienced is nothing to what He will do for us, if we are faithful to Him and do not put any obstacles to His loving designs for us. I can say nothing better to you now than to exhort you to live in God's house with great simplicity. Let yourself be led like a child of six, with the same candour and humility as though you knew nothing but your *Pater noster*. Look on your Superiors as Jesus Christ, and never doubt but that by them you will be led to Him, and that they will open to you the way to His Heart."

Sister Marie Rosalie profited by these lessons. Father de la Colombière returned very ill to Paray and went to see her. They had only been together a few minutes when the nuns' supper bell rang. Instantly Sister Marie Rosalie left her director, who was very edified by her exact obedience. A fortnight later he went again to see her. "How happy I am, my child, to see you a spouse of Jesus Christ!" "Oh, Father, how good God is!" And the two, overcome by the thought of God's goodness, remained for some time unable to speak. At last Father de la Colombière broke the long

silence and told his spiritual child of his joy at seeing how fully she entered into the spirit of her vocation. He strengthened her in her good resolutions and advised her to pass the remainder of her life as a child before her Father, warning her that she would never find rest except in His Heart.

Very shortly after this visit Father de la Colombière died. But the lessons of detachment he had given to his spiritual child bore ample fruit. His loss did not disturb her, especially when St. Margaret Mary assured her that their director was enjoying the happiness of Heaven. She continued to converse with him as though he had still been on earth, and her confidence in him obtained many graces for her. In two attacks of sudden and violent illness she was cured as soon as she invoked him.

The history of this soul shows us the spirit in which Father de la Colombière directed the spiritual life of those people in the world who put themselves under his guidance. He adapted himself to each, studied their characters, and led them on to the greatest generosity in the service of God.

Father de la Colombière had only been Rector of Paray for the short space of eighteen months, when he was sent to England, but in that time he laid the foundations of a solid spiritual life in many souls, and left Paray-le-Monial deeply regretted by all who had come under his influence.

CHAPTER XIV

Extracts from Letters and Sermons

“Those who read them will be charmed by them.”—*Letter on the Sermons of Father de la Colombière by St. Margaret Mary, 1686.*

SO many letters and sermons of Father de la Colombière have come down to us, that they form a complete volume of themselves. Extracts only can be given here, but they will be sufficient to prove amply that Father de la Colombière had the gift of writing as well as the gift of preaching, and that he used both to draw all hearts to Christ. Many of his sermons were published soon after his death, and it is of these that St. Margaret Mary wrote: “Those who read them will be charmed by them.”

The extracts here quoted are arranged according to the subject of which they treat, and not at all in chronological order, nor classed according to the persons to whom they were addressed. The correspondence concerning his life in England and his intercourse with the Visitation Convent at Paray during his stay in London will be given in another chapter.

ON SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

“Submission to God’s will is like an anchor which keeps us steady on the sea of this world, because all that happens here is permitted by this Divine Will. Imagine a man seated on a rock in the midst of the ocean; the waves break at his feet and he looks at them calmly; safe from all danger, he amuses himself with counting them as they break. Storms arise and the tempest does not even surprise him, whilst others on fragile vessels grow afraid and tremble as the winds rise and they are tossed here and there at the mercy of the element. Who would not envy the man on the rocks rather than him who trusts to a mere plank? Why, then, do we not attach ourselves to the rock which is Christ?” (Third Meditation on the Passion).

“Remember that real virtue consists in suffering all things patiently, especially our spiritual weaknesses, and in having an entire conformity to God’s Will in all that happens” (Letter 61).

“Once for all, we must resolve to displease the whole world rather than to displease God. I admit that to enter on the path of piety requires a certain amount of strength, but once the step is taken one enjoys great peace” (Letter 78).

“Believe me, it is neither retreats nor long prayers which make saints, but the sacrifice of our own will in even the holiest things, and a constant submission to God’s Will, which is made known to us by our Superiors !” (Letter 101).

“Leave all to the Providence of your kind Father in Heaven. May His Will be done. Whatever happens, nothing can prevent you from becoming holy” (Letter 122).

ON CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

“In a hundred passages in Scripture we are told that whoever hopes in God will never be confounded; that there is no danger so great, or necessity so pressing, from which God will not deliver those who hope in Him. Is not this enough to inspire us with perfect confidence? It is, unless we have an unjust and unworthy idea of God. What ! shall I count less on the words and promises of God than I would on those of any honourable man? God’s word is an authentic promise, a promise written in the book upon which I shall one day be judged—the book of the Gospels. God has been called by St. Paul the God of Hope, *Deus spei*, to teach us that of all the virtues there is none which gives Him more honour, none which shows more clearly that we look upon Him as indeed our God. The Fathers of the Church tell us that our hope is the measure of the graces we receive from God. How can God refuse to protect us, if it is true that we never give Him more glory than when we ask Him to do so? No, He will never reject you. Whatever enemy persecutes you, whatever sorrow weighs you down, however weak you may find

yourself, lean on God; throw yourself boldly into His arms, He will never withdraw them and let you fall ” (Sermon on Confidence).

“ We must serve God with all our hearts and neglect nothing to avoid offending Him, but all this must be done joyfully, with a heart full of confidence in spite of all the weakness we feel and the faults we commit ” (Letter 19).

“ I know very well that if we only looked at our own weakness, we might well give up; but it is certain that the weakest of us has no more reason to despair than the strongest—because our confidence is in God, Who is equally Almighty for the strong and the weak ” (Letter 16).

“ Both in prayer and out of prayer, keep yourself as much as possible at the Feet of Jesus Christ, telling Him that you acknowledge yourself to be the most imperfect and miserable of His creatures, who deserves nothing but punishment. But never let go your confidence in Him, and do not fear that He will reject you on account of your infidelities. You know very well that He came to seek those who offended Him, and that it was for sinners that He became Man ” (Letter 131).

ON PRAYER.

“ If you only say prayers when you are obliged, you will never learn to pray, you will never love prayer, nor be able to converse familiarly with Our Lord. It is neither our vows nor our promises which should attract us to this holy exercise, but rather the need our souls have of getting near to God. May the Holy Ghost give you this great gift of prayer. It is the hidden treasure of the Gospel, to possess which we should give up all ” (Letter 10).

“ When you have no consolation at prayer, remain a little longer at it, and humble yourself for your impatience for the time to be over ” (Letter 47).

“ When you can do nothing at prayer, make acts of humility; compare your nothingness with God’s greatness, your in-

gratitude with His benefits, your past life with the holiness your Rule requires. Contrast your want of virtue with the perfection of the Saints, and your faults with the virtues of those around you " (Letter 131).

ON HOLINESS.

" To be holy is to be a Christian philosopher; that is to say, it is to be free from error, delivered from all the passions which disturb the tranquillity of the soul, to be detached from creatures and from self, and to be so united to God by faith and love that one forgets all that is not God " (Sermon for All Saints).

" The devil deludes us when he persuades us that holiness consists in I know not what chimera which we cannot understand or which is above our strength. All paths to holiness are simple, and there is no one too ignorant to walk in them. But these phantoms of our imagination are the effects of our want of good will. We put virtue on an inaccessible height, and then pretend that it is the difficulty of attaining it which stops us and not our own will.

" Let us make up our minds to sacrifice our own will. I acknowledge that this is a great sacrifice, but it is because it is great, that it is worthy of God and of great souls; nothing is higher than this—perfection can go no further.

" Now, what is it that is so painful in this sacrifice? Every day, from purely human considerations, we perform things just as difficult either by necessity or by our free will. And yet this only will suffice to make us Saints " (Meditation on the Passion).

" Would you see what occasions we have of imitating Jesus Christ, Who submitted Himself without reserve to the Will of His Father? We shall find them in the changes of the season, in public calamities, in illness, in the worries of business, in all that concerns our relations, our children, our friends; *Ipse fecit nos*; we shall find them in the faults of others, of children, of servants. What a vast field we have before us for

the exercise of virtue ! And if we look at ourselves the horizon is wider still: what occasions occur for self-abnegation in our own weakness and imprudence ! We fall, we are wounded, we speak when we should have kept silence, or we say that which we should never have said: on the one hand, what weakness ! but on the other, what a source of spiritual riches ! If only we profited by the occasions we should become holy in a very short time ” (Fifth Meditation on the Passion).

ON THE DUTIES OF ONE’S STATE OF LIFE.

“ Regularity and order in the world depend on the care each one takes to accomplish the duties of his state of life. All disorder arises from negligence in performing these duties. Nothing would be more beautiful than the world if each one were faithful to the duties of his state. And yet these duties are neglected, even by those who profess to be pious, and the neglect is not made a matter of self-accusation. ‘ You have confessed the sins of Charles, but not those of the Emperor,’ said one of his confessors to Charles V.

“ In choosing a state of life, the advantages are considered, but how seldom the duties—these are not thought of at all. It would be thought strange for a man to become a religious without knowing the duties to which he was about to bind himself; yet what must one say of laymen who perhaps have been married for twenty years without ever thinking of the duties of the married state ?

“ Every state is holy when we are called to it by God, and it remains with us to sanctify ourselves in it. Even things which seem obstacles to salvation may become a means of perfection; it all consists in not looking upon things as an end in themselves, but only in using them with reference to our last end—the love and service of God ” (Sermon for the Annunciation).

ON RELIGIOUS LIFE.

“ After Profession, there can be no going back. Your vows are the chains which bind you to Jesus Christ and His Cross for the rest of your life. Oh, how dear these chains !

would that instead of by three, we could bind ourselves to our Spouse by a thousand ties. Close the links tighter and tighter, and break every bond which attaches you to creatures, whoever they be " (Letter 1).

"What does it matter whether you do little or much, provided you do the Will of your Divine Master " (Letter 122).

"I recommend to you an exact courageous observance of the smallest Rule and the least important orders of your Superiors. There is nothing small when it is a question of pleasing God, and it is a great evil to displease Him even in the least thing " (Letter 2).

"I have often told you, and I shall repeat it, as often as I can, that your Rules must take the place of everything until you observe them perfectly. You have no need either of a director or direction; consult your Rules when you are most fervent, and do not hesitate to believe that what God asks of you, by the inspirations He gives you, is an inviolable fidelity to His Will, which is exactly made known to you in the Rule " (Letter 95).

ON SUFFERING.

"I suffer with you, and I would willingly ask to bear your Cross entirely, if I did not fear to wrong you, and if I were not assured that it is the most precious jewel that you have received from Jesus Christ in the holy alliance you have contracted with Him " (Letter 109).

"Courage ! The sorrows which afflict you in this life are not as great as you think, for the love of God sweetens everything. In any case, they will not last, while Eternity endures for ever. Offer yourself willingly to the good Master you serve, and accept all the crosses He wishes to send you; He will help you to bear them and will Himself carry both you and your crosses " (Letter 52).

"What are you thinking of when you fear Our Lord will abandon you ? He did not do so when you fled from Him, and do you think He will leave you when you seek Him ?

Chase away the devil, who suggests thoughts to you which are such an outrage to the mercy of God, and do Our Lord the justice of believing that He is infinitely good, after all the proofs He has given you of His love ” (Letter 16).

“Remember that real love is increased by suffering, and that temptations only serve to purify love, however little we may feel this ” (Letter 49).

“A soul who loves God desires only to suffer for Him, and loves all those who give her an occasion of suffering for her Beloved ” (Letter 101).

*Letter to his Sister, Marguerite Elizabeth de la Colom-
bière, Religious of the Visitation at Condrien.*

“MY DEAR SISTER,—I am so afraid lest the way we live in the house of God should not correspond to the desire we showed to enter it. What a shame it would be if, after so many efforts and so much fervour when it was a question of leaving the world, we should afterwards lead a tepid life in religion. But this would be still more shameful in so holy a Convent as yours. You ask me to write to you on the subject of tepidity. Do you expect a sermon or a book instead of a letter? If it is true—which I cannot believe—that you are in a state of tepidity, it will require more than that to get you out of it, and I should fear to fail in helping you either by my prayers or my letters. I would rather have a sinner to convert than a religious who has fallen into tepidity. It is an evil almost without remedy. May God preserve you from this, my dearest sister. I would rather you were dead! . . . I know you are in a house where you have very holy examples before you, but even if you were not, you are not a child; you have a Rule—observe it faithfully. Strive to make yourself worthy of God’s favours by refusing yourself both interiorly and exteriorly what your nature demands. Do not be self-willed, but try always to do the will of others rather than your own, even in indifferent things. If you do this, you will see that

Our Lord will draw nigh to you and your coldness will disappear.

“ If you were really tepid you would read this and plenty of other things, and you would do no better; you would ask for remedies and never use them; you would make a thousand reflections on my letter and not one would have any effect ” (Letter 4).

“ Place yourself for ever in the Heart of Jesus Christ with all those who, forgetting themselves, give themselves up entirely to love and glorify Him, Who alone is worthy of all love and praise ” (Letter 74).

CHAPTER XV

England: 1660-1676

“Upon what country, in the days of yore, did Heaven more abundantly shower its blessings, to what people was ever given greater zeal for faith, deeper reverence for the Church?”—FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

THE schism under Henry VIII. and the terrible persecutions of the reign of Elizabeth had alike failed in extinguishing the Faith in England; it subsisted in spite of all penal laws, and the civil strife under the Commonwealth with all its Puritanical fanaticism could not root it out entirely from the land. On May 29th, 1660, Charles II. was restored to the throne, and the nation, wearied and weakened by turmoil, desired rest and concord. But the state of the Catholics was really worse than it had been since the reign of Elizabeth; they had expected toleration under a Stuart, but the Parliament of the Restoration kept them in a continual state of disquiet and apprehension.

In 1661 Charles married a Catholic Princess, Catherine of Braganza, daughter of John IV. of Portugal. This “Popish alliance,” as it was called, was extremely displeasing to the nation. The Privy Council tried to induce the Queen to allow her marriage to be celebrated according to the Protestant rite, instead of as a Catholic as the King had promised. But they urged in vain; Catherine declared that she would return to Portugal unmarried rather than thus violate her conscience. Her courage prevailed and the marriage took place in a private room at Portsmouth, by a Catholic priest and in the presence of six witnesses all pledged to secrecy.

From a religious point of view Charles was eminently unsatisfactory. For a time he treated his wife with attention, but he soon plunged into a life of licentiousness and caused untold anguish to his Consort. The unprincipled Lord Shaftesbury tried to urge the King to walk in the footsteps of Henry VIII. and divorce Catherine. In 1673 he engaged



EXTERIOR OF ST. JAMES' PALACE, LONDON

To face page 102

one Vaughan to move in the House of Commons "that there would be no security for the established religion without a Protestant Queen, and that Parliament should allow the King to divorce Queen Catherine, and vote him a dower of £500,000, with a consort of the reformed religion." This, however, Charles utterly refused to do. "They think I have a mind for a new wife," he said, "but I will not suffer an innocent woman to be wronged."

Charles had probably been baptized a Catholic, but it was not until he lay on his death-bed that he was reconciled to the Church.

In 1660 James, Duke of York, the King's brother, married Anne Hyde, who had eight children, of whom only two daughters survived her, Mary and Anne, both of whom afterwards became Queens of England. The Duchess of York died in 1671. In 1668 James had openly and finally professed the Catholic Faith. He told the King of his determination, and Charles declared that he, too, was of the same mind, and would consult with the Duke on the subject in the presence of some peers. The meeting took place, and Charles, with tears in his eyes, lamented the hardship of being compelled to profess a religion of which he did not approve, declared his determination to emancipate himself from this restraint, and requested the opinion of those present as to the best means of effecting his purpose with safety and success. They advised him to make known his intention to the King of France, Louis XIV., and to solicit the aid of that powerful monarch. Whether Charles was sincere at that time, or whether he merely used that means of procuring money from Louis, is a disputed point; but it is certain that he resisted all appeals of his brother James to declare himself a Catholic and take the consequences.

The religious antipathies of the people had been excited by the conversion of James to the Catholic Faith, for he was the presumptive heir to the throne, but they were fanned into flame in 1673 when it became known that he had married Maria d'Este, sister to the reigning Duke of Modena, a Catholic Princess.

At this time James was in the prime of life. The royal Admiral and sailor Prince, who had won such victories for the nation, would have been the pride of all England had it not been for the hatred of the people towards the Catholic Faith. As it was, he was considered one of the finest men at his brother's Court. He was not in the least insensible of the dangers to which his change of religion exposed him. As to his wife, the beautiful Mary Beatrice of Modena, she was so graceful, and above all so simple, that her charms, unmarred by vanity or affectation, excited boundless admiration in the English Court.

She had brought with her to England her chaplain, a French Jesuit, Père de Saint-Germain, who filled this office until 1675, when he was accused of high treason and expelled from the country. The facts were these: An apostate Frenchman named Luzancy feigned conversion, retracted his errors in writing, and applied to Père de Saint-Germain to receive his abjuration. Hardly had Père de Saint-Germain consented when Luzancy denounced him to the King and Parliament for trying, contrary to existing laws, to reconcile him to the Catholic Church. This lie was bolstered up with many others, and Père de Saint-Germain found himself immediately and without any trial accused of high treason, and was obliged to return to France. There he wrote a paper in which he fully vindicated himself. Luzancy fell into disgrace and disappeared for a time, but a few years later, as we shall see, he began a like persecution against Father de la Colombière.

The Duke of York, who was much attached to Père de Saint-Germain, pleaded for him with the King, but Charles was not brave enough to defy his Parliament; the utmost James could obtain was that a successor should be at once sent from France to fill the office of chaplain to his wife. The successor chosen by Père de la Chaise, with the consent of the General, Père Oliva, was Père Patouillet, S.J. But God had arranged otherwise. The French Ambassador in London and all the Catholics there strongly opposed the nomination of Père Patouillet. Indeed, so bitter was the animosity of the people against the French, and in particular against the French

Jesuits, that even the Duke of York gave in for the sake of peace, and consented that Père Patouillet should not be received in England, on condition, however, that Père de la Chaise should name someone else.

It seems almost certain that the French Jesuits had great hopes at this time of the ultimate conversion of Charles and of the English nation. Otherwise it is scarcely probable that they would have risked so much in consenting to send one of their number again to England. Père de la Chaise had received a letter from the French Ambassador, Monsieur de Ruvigny, which left him in no doubt as to the state of affairs.

The following letter from Père de Saint-Germain to Mr. Coleman, who was secretary to the Duchess of York, gives us a clear idea of what was impending:

“Monsieur de Ruvigny says that he finds that the storm will unavoidably fall upon France and the Catholics, who are very angry that endeavours are made to bring a successor to Monsieur Saint-Germain, of the French nation. And he further says that it will absolutely ruin the Catholic religion and irritate the enemies of France; neither does he doubt, but that it will also prove fatal to the Duke, for which he absolutely blames the Jesuits and Mr. Coleman, who are now more than ever averse to the Protestants, and likewise to one party among the Catholics and Ministers of the State, for they are persuaded that those who are in the position of confessor to the King of France and to the Duke do act most impudently in that they are entangled betwixt King and the Catholics, because they would introduce an unlimited authority. They urge Mr. Coleman to take strange steps, such as will precipitate them into destruction, and above all, they will attribute this to France; so that Monsieur de Ruvigny is very ill-satisfied with these proceedings, for it is most certain that the persecution will be very terrible against the Duke, the Catholics and all the Jesuits, and above all against France.”

In spite of this black picture, Père de la Chaise named a Jesuit of the French Province to go to England as preacher and confessor to the Duchess of York, and that Jesuit was Father de la Colombière.

The confessor of Louis XIV. made no mistake as to the kind of man that was wanted: English susceptibilities had to be considered, and it was necessary to send an unknown, quiet, retiring man, who by effacing himself would fulfil his mission, without giving offence to anyone. He must be a man, too, who by his discretion, wisdom, and firmness was capable of so directing the conduct of the Duchess as to render her irreproachable in the eyes of all; and a man, moreover, who was clear-sighted enough to grip and direct with the utmost prudence the religious interests which united the Kings of France and England. Above all, a man of heroic courage was necessary—one who would bear persecution as a Saint, and who, if the need arose, would lay down his life as a martyr.

Such a man was Father de la Colombière. Père de la Chaise knew him well and had no misgivings as to his qualities when he begged the Provincial to send him to London.

The necessary negotiations took place during the months of August and September, 1676. Father de la Colombière obeyed the summons with no other thought than that of fulfilling the Will of his Master. He had long inured himself to detachment, and when the orders of his Superiors withdrew him from work which he naturally liked, and which had procured him the esteem and affection of all, he did not hesitate in at once acquiescing when told to leave, not work only, but friends and country, and even the regularity of life in a religious house, in order to go to a land very different from his own, alien to the Faith he loved, where he had to take up his position in a Court which even at that time was notorious for its licentiousness. "They are sending me to England," he wrote, "as confessor to the Duchess of York. I cannot see the end, but God's Will be done."

Shortly after September 16th he left Paray-le-Monial and went to Roanne, and from there to Paris. Here he had an opportunity of seeing both Père de la Chaise and Père de Saint-Germain and was thus able to get some information for the guidance of his life in England.

He arrived in London early in October and went to St.

James's Palace, the residence of the Duke and Duchess of York, on the 13th.

Here he began and accomplished the work for which God had chosen him: the guidance of the Princess to such virtue as should enable her to bear patiently the many trials that awaited her, even to exile and the loss of her throne; to prepare himself for the imprisonment and exile which were to be his lot; to keep burning in English hearts devotion to the Blessed Sacrament; to promote a more frequent reception of Holy Communion; and to sow the seed of devotion to the Sacred Heart, the pledge of grace to all who practised it, and the hope of religious resurrection for the nation in the future.

CHAPTER XVI

A Jesuit at the English Court : 1676-1678

"I feared not but that I should find God in England, since it was He Himself Who sent me there."—FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

THE young Duchess of York was just eighteen when Father de la Colombière was sent to be her guide. For three years she had lived at the English Court surrounded by hidden enemies, "all without faith or conscience."

Mary Beatrice of Modena is a heroine who is too little known. She had consented to her marriage with the object of sacrificing herself for the conversion of England. On March 16th, 1675, Pope Clement X. addressed her the following letter: "... We have conceived a well-founded hope that you will apply yourself with zeal to relieve, by your constant patronage, the Catholics living in this kingdom, and that you will take prompt measures in their interest, for you have made known to us by the Duchess of Mantua, your mother, that you have married for this end, and that moreover you are ready, if it were needful, to immolate yourself as a victim for these same Catholics." Whilst she was still Duchess of York, Mary Beatrice lost her children one after another. She was banished from the kingdom with her husband at the time of the so-called Popish Plot in 1678. They returned in 1682, and when in 1685 James ascended the English throne, the people, charmed with the radiant beauty of the young Queen, hailed her with enthusiasm. It was but a passing phase. Three years later she was forced to fly from the kingdom with her infant son, the heir-apparent to the throne. She went to France, where for thirty years she lived a most perfect life. Bourdaloue, who knew her intimately, wrote: "I know no one more holy and more worthy of veneration. After all I have heard, I can but strike my breast and say to myself: 'This queen will one day judge us.'"

It was to prepare the Duchess for all that was to befall her, and to lead her in the paths of holiness, that God sent Father de la Colombière to London. He was not long in forming his opinion of the Princess. On November 20th, 1676, he wrote the following words: "The Duchess of York is a Princess of great piety; she receives holy Communion every week, sometimes oftener, and every day she makes half an hour's mental prayer." Nine months later, in July, 1677, the Jesuit chaplain wrote to his brother Humbert: "I serve a Princess who is pious in every sense of the word, gentle and amiable, an example of all that is good."

On the Feast of All Saints, 1676, Father de la Colombière preached for the first time in the Chapel Royal of St. James's Palace. Part of this sermon has come down to us, and there is reason to believe that the preacher was simply expressing the truth and not merely complimenting his royal patron when he said: "I know, Madam, that when your Royal Highness desired me to ascend this pulpit, you had no other end in view than to procure for my hearers a means of sanctification; and I assure you, in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that I have no other aim. But, however praiseworthy may have been the intentions of your Royal Highness, and however determined I may be to second them, I could hope for but little result from my labours, did I not possess for them the support of your example. Indifferent Christians may indeed under all circumstances find excuses for neglect of their duties, but can they be indifferent to the example of a Princess who, in the very flower of her age and in a rank of life in which it is generally supposed that anything is permissible, openly declares herself on the side of piety, and daily observes its practice with zealous exactness? I will add, Madam, that before one who is herself irreproachable, I shall not be under the restraints which prudence so often dictates to those speaking in the presence of Princes whose lives are not blameless. There is no vice which I shall not endeavour to combat, for there is none your conduct does not condemn. I shall be able to raise my voice, with whatever power God may give me, against the evils of our age, and no one will ever imagine that

my reproaches are addressed to your Royal Highness. Thus, Madam, the word of God will have free course in your presence, and there will be no occasion to gloss over before you the sinner's wounds, which indeed will appear more hideous when contrasted with your purity."

On her side the Duchess of York had complete confidence in the preacher, not only as regards the religious instructions he delivered, but also for the direction of her conscience. She opened her heart fully to him, as we may see from the memoir of Queen Mary Beatrice, written by the Superior of the Visitation Convent at Chaillot.

"The Queen honoured us by her confidence from her earliest years. I was extremely consoled in seeing her admirable dispositions. For a long time I never dared to question her, but when I did so she said that Father de la Colombière had had her whole confidence, that she had never had such counsels as he had given, and that no one ever knew her so well. Among other advice he laid much stress upon the necessity of cultivating in her position a great simplicity of purpose, looking only to God, amid the multiplicity of things which engaged her; that God wished her to abandon herself and all that concerned her to Him to be disposed of as He willed; that she was to look less at what she had done than at what she ought to do, as this would make her pliant and supple in the hands of God for whatever He ordained—even in those events which offended God she was not to give way to impatience, but to pray Him to remedy the evil." We can only admire the prudence of such direction. Father de la Colombière found this Princess on the steps of a throne, perfectly innocent, full of faith and burning with love for God. She gave up her dreams of virginity in the hope of obtaining the crown of martyrdom. She was certainly well prepared to receive the message of the Sacred Heart, and her confessor spared no pains in developing her spiritual life and in leading her to the height of virtue.

From November, 1676, to September, 1678, Father de la Colombière preached on every Sunday and festival, besides a course of sermons in the Lent of both 1677 and 1678. Besides

this, he saw the Duchess several times each week both in the confessional and in ordinary conversation, and always he led her on to find her strength, her peace, and her joy in the Heart of Christ.

Father de la Colombière's exterior life at the English Court was one of extreme regularity and simplicity. "A guest in St. James's Palace, he lived there in the quietest manner, a stranger to the excitements and tumults of the Court, knowing only those parts of the Palace through which he was obliged to pass to reach the apartments of the Duchess of York. His room overlooked the wide space in the front of the building, yet never once did he gaze from the windows on what is one of the most beautiful views in London. He never visited the monuments or curiosities of the town, nor did he frequent any of the public walks, for he went out only to visit the sick or those to whom he hoped to be of service. Devoting himself entirely to God and the good of his neighbours, he never conversed with any except on religious topics."

Yet the Court of Charles II. was a brilliant one, and many were the occasions which might have excited the interest or curiosity of anyone.

There was no day on which Father de la Colombière did not find ample opportunity for mortification. He was delicate in constitution and the English food was a real trial, but no complaint ever passed his lips. The climate, too, tried him severely; the cold, dampness, and fogs of a London winter must have been a real cause of suffering to one born and bred in Burgundy. He slept on a hard mattress laid on the floor, and would never allow a fire to be lit in his room. This privation caused him very great suffering. The winter of 1676 in London was long and very rigorous. As early as October 19th the streets became dangerous on account of the frost; snow fell so heavily in December that people declared they had never seen such snow before. The Thames was frozen hard, so much so that in January, 1677, feasting of all sorts took place on the ice. In addition to these daily privations, the holy Jesuit practised bodily penances.

The pension which he received from the Duchess of York

was about £200, and this Father de la Colombière found to be greatly above his needs. He gave largely to the poor, even obliging himself by vow so to use the money. He was fully alive to the dangers of his position and used all the precaution which prudence suggested. He dressed as a layman, as did all the English Jesuits at that time, and in one of his first letters to France we find him warning his correspondents to avoid anything compromising in their manner of addressing him. "Do not direct to me as 'Reverend Father,'" he writes, "for this may cause much annoyance. Inside you may use the word 'Father' if you like, as long as you do not use it on the envelope, for if a Protestant saw the word, he would be likely enough to throw your letter into the river."

In a letter to his brother written in November, 1676, we have another picture of the state of affairs in England:

"I am already as much accustomed to English life as though I had been born in London. There are a great many Catholics here, but I am told that the number of devout persons amongst them is but small. I am not surprised at this, for had we as little spiritual help in France as they have here, I think our state would be worse than theirs. No English subject is allowed to enter the Ambassador's chapel to hear Mass, and since my arrival men have been placed at the doors of all the chapels, even at those of the Queen's chapel, to arrest any Englishman who might be seen entering. There are many Frenchmen in the town, but it is a year now since they have received any instruction."

A little later he wrote again: "If the Catholics of this country possessed but half the religious privileges which abound in France, there would be found amongst them many saints. But it is terrible to see the way they are persecuted, and the few helps to devotion they can obtain. Without spiritual instruction, and forbidden to hear Mass, can we wonder that they are not more fervent? It is indeed a sadly desolate Church, and it seems to me that the prayers of the faithful could not be better employed than in begging for the religious revival of this kingdom."

Destitution of religious privileges was not the only cause

of the low ebb to which piety had fallen in England. Public scandals and disorders were common. After ten months' residence in London, Father de la Colombière again tells his brother Humbert of his experiences: "In the midst of the general depravity which heresy has wrought in this town, I find amongst the inhabitants much fervour, nobility of character, and an abundant harvest ripe for the sickle and ready for the hand which God shall appoint to garner it. . . . For myself, I am as little troubled by the excitements of the Court as if I were in a desert."

Such was the exterior life of Father de la Colombière at the English Court. It was a life full of peril for both body and soul, but he passed through it unscathed, ever deepening his interior life, which, as his Rule had taught him, was ever to be the source of all the energy which was to animate him to the exterior works proper to his state.

CHAPTER XVII

Progress in Perfection

“Be Thou ever loved and praised by all creatures, my most kind Saviour! What could I do if Thou wert not my strength? But being so, as Thou dost assure me, what cannot I perform for Thy glory?”—FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

HOWEVER numerous the occupations which fell to his lot during his life in London, Father de la Colombière did not for an instant relax his efforts towards his personal sanctification.

Before leaving Paray he had left a note of advice for St. Margaret Mary, and she, enlightened by Our Lord, had written him a few words which were to be of untold value to him in the difficult and lonely position in which he found himself at the English Court.

St. Margaret Mary could not but grieve at the departure of her guide and friend; Our Lord Himself consoled her: “Do not I suffice thee, I Who am thy first beginning and thy last end?” These words reassured her and she abandoned herself completely to God’s Will. The note Father de la Colombière left for her was this: “God asks of you everything and nothing. He asks everything because He wishes to reign over you and in you, as one who entirely belongs to Him, in such a manner that he can dispose of everything, that nothing in you may resist Him, but that all may bend to Him and obey the least sign of His Will. He seeks nothing of you, because He wishes Himself to do everything in you, without your interfering in anything, contenting yourself with being the subject on which and in which He acts, so that all glory may be His, and that He alone may be known, loved, and praised for ever.”

Father de la Colombière’s mission to England was one of extreme difficulty. He was sent truly as a sheep among wolves. Shortly after his arrival he wrote to Paray: “Here, perils abound and there is no other help save that which comes from God.” That God did send him help in need is

certain: each time the dangers seemed about to overwhelm him, God sent him, either by human means or directly from Himself, a word of encouragement, as if to prove the truth of St. Margaret Mary's prediction: "God will assist him secretly."

The first warning of what was to befall him in London came to him in a note from St. Margaret Mary:

"1. Father de la Colombière's talent is to lead souls to God; therefore the devils will do all in their power against him. He will meet with trouble, even from persons consecrated to God, who will not approve of what he says in his sermons to convert them; but in these crosses the goodness of God will be his support, so long as he continues to trust in Him."

"2. He must have a compassionate gentleness for sinners, and only use severe measures when especially inspired by God to do so.

"3. Let him be particularly careful not to separate good from its source. This sentence is short, but contains much which God will enable him to understand according to the diligence with which he applies himself to find its meaning."

Little by little these words were entirely verified. Even the third point, which sounds so obscure, became perfectly clear to him in a retreat he made in 1677. During this retreat he wrote the following letter to Mère de Saumaise:

"LONDON, *Feb. 7th*, 1677.—You will be interested to know that on looking at the note you put into my hands at parting I found it contained a revelation in almost every word. I can truly say that in it Our Lord omitted nothing which I could require; indeed, it contained a remedy for every evil. All that which was predicted in it has been accomplished, save the persecution alluded to in the first paragraph as about to come upon me through persons dedicated to God. As to those trials spoken of in the same passage with which the devil is to vex me, there are few with which I have not been assaulted by him. The second and third articles were of the greatest value for my peace of mind and the sanctification of my soul. At first, and indeed for three months, I believed the advice they contained was of general application to the whole course of my life, but by degrees I saw its special application to present

events, and its immediate use in frustrating certain intentions and plans which troubled me much and were clearly opposed to the Divine Will."

Again, in another letter to Mère de Saumaise, dated May 3rd, 1677, Father de la Colombière writes: "I do not believe that without the advice contained in Sister Margaret Mary's letter I could have borne the pains which I have suffered, and which have never attacked me with more violence than when pressed and overwhelmed with work."

There were two sources from which the holy Jesuit drew the strength of which he stood in need—the exact observance of his Rule and his devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

Constant fidelity to Rule could have been no easy matter to the chaplain of St. James's Court; yet he had bound himself by vow to observe it with perfection, and bravely did he keep his promise. "The exact observance of the Rule," he writes, "is itself a source of blessing; in it consists my greatest treasure, and from it I derive such good that, did I find myself alone on a desert island, deprived of everything, I should be content if God gave me the grace to keep my Rule. O holy precepts and obligations, happy the soul who has learnt to observe and love you!"

And again: "How good God has been to give us rules for our daily conduct, and how blind are we when, departing from His law, we fancy we can find for ourselves a better! Believe me, our real happiness consists in the careful study and observance of His minutest precepts. Undisciplined hearts, thinking to be a law to themselves, find the Commandments of God an insupportable yoke; but to those who have tried it there is, in the very act of obedience, a hidden treasure, an abundance of peace, and when the law is kept through love, liberty a thousand times sweeter than the hollow treasures of the world."

Father de la Colombière's devotion to the Sacred Heart grew daily, and with it his anxiety to impart it to others. Again and again he comes back to the sweet theme: "O Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach me perfect forgetfulness of self, since that is the only way by which I can enter into Thee. Since all that I do will henceforth be Thine, enable me to act

so as to do nothing unworthy of Thee. Teach me what I must do to attain to the purity of Thy love, which Thou hast inspired me to desire. I feel a strong desire to please Thee, and a still stronger sense of my inability to do so without special light and help, which I can expect only from Thee. Lord, may Thy Will be done in me. I resist this, I know, but I wish not to resist it. It is for Thee to do all, Divine Heart of Jesus. Thou alone wilt have all the glory of my sanctification if I become holy. This appears to me as clear as the daylight; but it will be to Thy great glory, and it is for this alone that I desire perfection."

In February, 1677, Father de la Colombière made an eight days' retreat. Comparing his state of mind and soul with what it was two years before, he finds a difference. At the outset of his apostolic life he was full of fear and felt no ardour for works of zeal, lest he should become ensnared by the dangers of the active life. This fear has now passed. "To-day," he writes, "I am strongly inclined to labour for the salvation and sanctification of souls. I seem only to love life for this end, and only to love sanctification because it is an admirable means of winning many hearts to Jesus Christ." He attributes this change to the lessening of the passion of vainglory which he finds in himself. "I think that the reason why I am in this disposition is that I no longer find such a passion for vainglory. This is a miracle which only God could work in me. Prominent offices do not attract me as they formerly did. I seem now only to seek for souls, and that those in villages are as dear to me as others. Moreover, by the mercy of God, I am far from being influenced by the praise and esteem of men as I used to be, though I am still too much affected by it. I was formerly so much troubled by this temptation that it deprived me of all courage, and almost caused me to lose the hope of saving myself whilst attending to the salvation of others. So that if I had been free to do so, I doubt not that I should have spent my days in solitude.

"This temptation was first weakened by something which N. N. [St. Margaret Mary] once said to me, namely, that when praying for me, Our Lord intimated to her that my soul was

dear to Him, and that He would take special care of it, upon which I answered: 'How can this accord with what I experience in myself? Can Our Lord love a person so vain as I am, a person who only seeks to please men, and to be valued by them, and who is full of human respect?' 'Father,' was the reply, 'all this does not dwell within you.' These words calmed me, and I began to be less disturbed about these temptations, besides which, they became weaker and less frequent."

Two things principally contributed to strengthen this desire to work for souls: the success with which God crowned his work at Paray and the note St. Margaret Mary had left him. The partial verification of the three warnings left him in no doubt that the advice came from God. In the retreat of February, 1677, God gave him a further proof of this by flooding his soul with light upon the parts of all the note which till then had appeared so obscure, and also by giving him a still clearer insight into spiritual things.

We give his own notes of this retreat, for no other words would be as telling:

"The thought that God has made me entirely for Himself seems to elevate me above creatures, and places me in liberty and independence which produces great repose in my heart, and a strong desire to wear myself out in His service. I earnestly wish, if it be possible, never to resist God's will. I feel a strong desire to obey all His inspirations, especially since a person who is extremely familiar with God tells me that Our Lord had intimated that I had long been resisting Him concerning something about which I hesitated, as I thought, through fear of not acting prudently.

"The third day of my exercises, I perceived that the first point on the paper which had been given to me at my departure for London, which point had been confirmed by a letter which I received two months ago, was but too true. For since my departure from Paris the devil had spread five or six snares for me, which gave me much trouble. From them I have only escaped by special grace, and after having been guilty of much cowardice. I know not how it was that the trouble which these things caused me did not show me this. They were not

things absolutely bad, but things in which I was in doubt as to which of the two was the better, and the side of nature was so much strengthened by the devil's temptation that it prevented me from seeing what was most perfect, or at least deprived me of the power to embrace it, so that I remained much troubled and in anxiety, which has now, thank God, ceased, through the grace which Our Lord has given me to see the truth, and to cause me to embrace it.

“The fifth day, God caused me, if I mistake not, to understand the third point of the memorandum which I brought from France: ‘Let him take great care not to separate good from its source: this saying is short, but contains many things, and God will cause him to understand it according to the application which he makes of it.’ I had often pondered these words, ‘separate good from its source,’ without being able to fathom them. To-day, having observed that God was to give me to understand them according to application which I should make, I meditated long, and found only this: that I was to refer to God whatever good He might be pleased to perform through me, since He is the only source of it. But when I had with difficulty turned away my thoughts from this consideration, all of a sudden light flashed into my mind, by the help of which I saw the doubt which had troubled me during the first two or three days of my exercises clearly solved, concerning the use which I ought to make of my salary. I understood that this saying includes a great deal, because it urges us to the perfection of poverty, to great detachment from vainglory, to perfect observance of the Rules, and the source of deep peace, interior and exterior, and of many most edifying acts. By following another path under whatever pretext I might have sheltered myself, (1) I should have departed from the perfection of poverty; (2) I should have had to ask for dispensations unnecessarily; (3) I should have greatly encouraged vainglory and self-love; (4) I should have exposed myself to external cares which would have occupied me much; (5) I should have run the risk of scandalizing those in France and encouraging them to love the world, and I should at least have deprived those in England of a good example; (6) I was about to entangle

myself amongst the thorns with which avarice is wont to be accompanied, and I was beginning to be very uneasy thereat. It is wonderful, and makes me see how good Thou art, O my God, that Thou hast given me grace to bind myself by vow to follow this counsel before giving me to understand it. I cannot express the joy, gratitude, trust in God, and courage which this thought has given me. There still remained some parts which I had not included in the vow, but I am now, please God, at rest concerning this for life. Blessed a thousand times be God, Who has hereby given me to know His mercy, and the holiness of the person through whom He was pleased to give me this advice.

“In the second article I found a remedy against a temptation which has troubled me much since my arrival here. I found clearly stated there the conduct I ought to have observed towards someone whose actions displeased me. I know not how it was that I failed to see this sooner; praised be God, Who has at last caused me to do so. This paper contained the precise rules which I needed to withdraw me from the snares of the devil; only one point remains, the execution of which God will permit when it pleases Him. My whole trust is in Him.

“The sixth day, when considering the special vow which I had made, I felt touched with deep gratitude to God, Who gave me grace to make this vow. I had never had so much leisure to consider it. I felt great joy at seeing myself bound by so many chains to do God’s will. I was in no wise terrified at the thought of so many delicate and strict obligations, because God seems to have filled me with great confidence, that I have fulfilled His Will in making these engagements, and that He will help me to keep my word. It is quite plain that without special protection it would be almost impossible to keep this vow. I have renewed it with my whole heart, and I hope that Our Lord will never let me break it.

“Seventh day. I observed to-day that although God has granted me numerous graces in this retreat, this has scarcely at all been in my meditations. On the contrary, I had much greater difficulty in them than usual. I do not know if this

proceeded from my determination to keep to the usual points, for which I feel little attraction. I think that I could have spent several hours without exhaustion or fatigue in considering God around me and in me, sustaining and helping me; in praising Him for His mercy; in maintaining feelings of trust; in desires to belong to Him unreservedly, and to destroy whatever in me is of myself; in desires to glorify Him, and to make Him glorified by others; in the prospect of my own weakness, and of the great need I have of being aided from above; in contentment at whatever God wills, whether concerning me or concerning those with whom I am connected. Yet when I endeavoured to meditate upon a mystery I was fatigued from the first and my head was splitting, so that I can truly say that I never had less devotion in meditation. I have thought that in the future it would be well to continue my former practice of uniting myself to God present by faith, and then keeping this up by acts of the other virtues to which I felt inclined. This way is not, I think, liable to delusion, because it is most true that God is in us and we in Him, and that this presence should be a powerful motive of respect, confidence, love, joy, and fervour. Above all, the imagination does not participate in the care which we take to represent to ourselves this truth, and we only employ for this purpose the light of faith.

“This eighth day, I think that I have found a great treasure, if only I know how to turn it to my profit. This is a firm trust in God, founded upon His infinite goodness, and upon the experience which I have had that He will not fail us in our needs. Moreover, I find in the memorandum which was given me on leaving France that He promises to be my strength according to my confidence in Him. For this reason I have determined to set no bounds to my trust, and to extend it to everything. I think that in future I ought to use Our Lord as a buckler to surround me, which I will oppose to all the darts of my enemies. Thou wilt be my strength, O my God! Thou wilt be my guide, my director, my counsellor, my patience, my peace, my justice, and my prudence. I will have recourse to Thee in my temptation, aridity, disgust, weariness, and fears;

or rather, I will no longer fear delusions, nor the artifices of the devil, nor my own weakness, nor my indiscretion, nor even my distrust, for Thou wilt be my strength in all my crosses. Thou dost promise to be so in proportion to my trust, and the wonder is that, together with this condition, this trust more and more appears to me to be Thy gift. For ever loved and praised by all creatures be Thou, kind Saviour! What could I do if Thou wert not my strength? But being so, as Thou dost assure me, what cannot I perform for Thy glory? *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*—‘I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me.’ Thou art everywhere in me, and I in Thee: wherever I am, whatever danger or whatever enemy threatens me, my strength is ever with me. This thought can in an instant banish all my troubles, and above all the rebellion of nature which is so powerful in certain moments, that I cannot help trembling for my perseverance, and shuddering at the thought of the state of complete deprivation to which God does me the favour to call me. Every text of Scripture which speaks of hope, comforts and strengthens me. *In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum. . . . In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam; quoniam tu, Domine, fortitudo mea. . . . Dominus firmamentum meum et refugium meum. . . . Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea, quem timebo? . . . Laus mea et fortitudo mea Dominus*—‘In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped; let me not be confounded for ever. In peace in the self-same I will sleep and take my rest; for Thou, O Lord, hast singularly established me in hope. May I love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my firmament and my refuge. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? My praise and my strength is the Lord. He also shall be, if He wills, my gratitude.’*

“In this Retreat, which I conclude to-day, the lights which God has been pleased to give me have been shorter, but also, by His mercy, clearer than formerly. The feeling which I have generally had, has been a desire to abandon and forget

* Here Father de la Colombière gives the account of the vision of the Sacred Heart vouchsafed to St. Margaret Mary, an account of which has been given in Chapter XI.

myself entirely; according to the advice which was given to me on God's part, as I believe, by the person whom He has used to grant me many favours. I sometimes caught a glimpse of what this perfect forgetfulness of self consisted in, and of the state of a soul which has no longer any reserve with God. This condition, which has so long alarmed me, begins to please me, and I hope to try to attain to it by the grace of God. I sometimes discover in myself sentiments opposed to this entire abandonment, and this causes me much shame.

"When I am quite myself, I feel by the infinite mercy of God a freedom of heart which causes me unspeakable joy. I think that nothing can render me miserable. I feel attached to nothing, at least for the time; but this does not prevent me from feeling each day the movements of almost all the passions; still, a moment of reflection calms them.

"I often experienced great inward joy at the thought that I was in God's service. I felt that this was worth more than all the favour of kings. The occupations of worldly people appeared to me most despicable in comparison with what is done for God.

"I find myself elevated above all the kings of the earth by the honour which I possess of belonging to God. I feel that it is worth more to know and love Him than to reign, and although I have occasionally thoughts of ambition and vainglory, it is certain that all the glory in the world, without the knowledge and love of God, would not tempt me. I feel great compassion for all those who are not satisfied with God, though they may possess whatever they desire besides Him.

"I have discovered and continue to discover daily fresh delusions in zeal, and I felt an earnest desire to purify thoroughly that with which God inspires me, and which I feel is daily increasing.

"I had also feelings of deep shame about my past life, a most firm and clear persuasion of how little we contribute to the conversion of souls, and a distinct view of my nothingness.

"I perceived the necessity there is of walking with much circumspection, and with great humility and self-distrust in the direction of souls, and in one's own spiritual life; in detaching

oneself entirely from the excessive desire which one naturally has to make great progress, arising from a feeling of self-love. This produces great delusions, and may entangle us in much that is imprudent. The love of humility, of lowliness, and of a hidden and obscure life, is an efficacious remedy for all these evils. We insensibly, and most absurdly, compare ourselves with the greatest of Saints, and perform, from the most imperfect motives, what they did by the movement of the Holy Ghost. We wish to take place in a day, in ourselves and in others, that which cost them many years of labour; we have not their prudence, nor their experience, nor their talents, nor their supernatural gifts; in short they were Saints, and we are very far from being so, yet we are presumptuous enough to imagine that we can do all that they did.

“There is no peace except in perfect forgetfulness of self; we must make up our minds to forget even our spiritual interests in order to seek simply the glory of God.

“I feel an increasing desire to observe my Rules carefully and find great pleasure in practising them. The more exact I become, the more I seem to enter into perfect liberty. It certainly does not impede me; on the contrary, this yoke seems to make me, as it were, move more lightly. I regard this as the greatest grace which I ever received in my life.

“I am indescribably wretched in one thing: my imagination is foolish and extravagant. My heart is assailed by all the passions, and hardly a day passes without their agitating it one after the other, with all their most unruly movements. Sometimes it is real objects which excite them, sometimes it is imaginary ones. It is true that by God’s mercy I endure all this without contributing much to it, and without consenting thereto; but every moment I come upon these wild passions which agitate this poor heart. This self-love flits from corner to corner and has always some retreat; I pity myself very much, but I do not become angry nor impatient, for what good would that do? I ask God to show me what I ought to do for His service and to purify myself: but I have resolved to wait quietly until it shall please Him to do so, for I am deeply convinced that this belongs to Him alone. *Quis potest facere*

mundum de immundo conceptum semine, nisi tu qui solus es?—
'Who can make him clean who is conceived unclean, but Thou, my God?' Provided that I can go to God in great simplicity and confidence, I am only too happy. My God, may I ever feel this.

"I have an earnest desire to do right, and I know the means to use. Provided I act carefully, I shall seldom fail, but this is a great grace from God which I most humbly ask of Him.

"The following words never occur to my mind without light, peace, liberty, sweetness, and love entering it together with them: Simplicity, Trust, Humility, Complete Abandonment, No Reserve, the Will of God, my Rules.

"I have no greater joy than to discover in myself some new infirmity which had hitherto concealed itself from me. I have several times experienced that pleasure in this retreat, and I shall do so whenever it pleases God to communicate to me His light in the reflections which I make upon myself. I firmly believe and have much pleasure in believing that God leads those who commit themselves to His guidance, and watches over them in little things.

"I feel daily greater devotion to Saint Francis of Sales: I ask our Lord to grant me grace to remember this Saint frequently in order to invoke him and imitate him."

The retreat ends by an offering to the Sacred Heart prefaced by the reasons for which he makes this oblation:

"This offering is made in order to honour that Divine Heart, the seat of all virtues, the source of all blessings, and the refuge of all holy souls.

"The principal virtues which we intend to honour in Him are: First, a most ardent love for God His Father, joined to a most profound respect, and the greatest possible humility. Secondly, infinite patience under trials, deep sorrow and contrition for sins the burden of which He had taken upon Himself, the trust of a most affectionate Son, together with the shame of a grievous sinner. Thirdly, tender compassion for our misery, immense love in spite of these miseries and notwithstanding all these movements, each of which was carried to the highest possible point; unchangeable equanimity,

produced by such perfect conformity to the Will of God, that no event could disturb it, however contrary it might seem to His zeal, His humility, and even His love, and to all His other dispositions.

“ This Heart is still, as far as can be, in the same dispositions, and, above all, ever burning with love for men, ever open to shower down every kind of grace and blessings, ever touched with our sorrows, ever animated with the desire to impart to us its treasures, and to give itself to us, ever ready to receive us and afford us shelter, home, and paradise even in this life.

“ Notwithstanding all this, He only meets in men’s hearts with hardness, neglect, contempt, and ingratitude. He loves and is not loved in return, and men do not recognize His love, because they will not submit to receive the gifts by which He wishes to show it, nor to listen to the tender and secret declarations which He wishes to make of it to our hearts.”

OFFERING.

“ In reparation for so many outrages and for such cruel ingratitude, most adorable and amiable Heart of Jesus, and to avoid as far as I can such a misfortune, I offer to Thee my heart, with all its movements. I give myself entirely to Thee, and henceforth I protest most sincerely that I desire to forget myself and all that relates to me, in order to remove any obstacle which might impede an entrance into this Divine Heart, which Thou hast the goodness to open to me, and into which I hope to enter, to live and die there with Thy most faithful servants, penetrated and inflamed with Thy love. I offer to this Heart all the merit and all the satisfaction of all the Masses, prayers, acts of mortification, religious practices, acts of zeal, of humility, of obedience, and of all the other virtues which I shall practise until the last moment of my life. I do so not only to honour the Heart of Jesus and its admirable dispositions, but I also humbly beg Him to accept the entire oblation which I make to Him, to dispose of it in the manner which shall please Him, and in favour of whom He pleases; and as I have already ceded to the holy souls in purgatory

whatever there is in my actions calculated to satisfy the divine justice, I wish that this may be distributed to them according to the good pleasure of the Heart of Jesus.

“This will not prevent me fulfilling the obligations which I have to say Masses, and to pray for certain intentions which obedience prescribes, nor from saying Masses for charity for poor persons, or for my brethren and friends who may ask for them; but as upon these occasions I shall use something which does not belong to me, I propose, as is only just, that the obedience, charity, and other virtues which I then practise shall all belong to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which has enabled me to exercise these virtues, which consequently belong to It unreservedly.”

It seems that this retreat of the venerable servant of God may be summed up in the words of St. Paul: “Gladly then will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may be made perfect in me” (2 Cor. xii. 9). Father de la Colombière was now more than ever ready to undertake and suffer all for the glory of God. St. Margaret Mary did not cease to pray for her friend, and from time to time, as we shall see, she sent him the inspired counsels which were necessary for him. He had yet “a great way to go” and many sufferings to endure before being called to his reward, but he went forth gladly to his work, knowing that he could do all things in Him Who strengthened him.

CHAPTER XVIII

Devotion to the Sacred Heart in England

“Give us, O my God, a new heart, pure and tender, neither of marble nor of bronze, a heart in all things like to Thine.”—FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

FROM the very outset of his ministry in London, Father de la Colombière set himself to enkindle devotion to the Sacred Heart in the hearts of all with whom he came in contact. Our Lord's message to His servant had not been in vain. The words of his Divine Master were ever present to the mind and heart of the faithful priest: “Go to My servant, Father Claude de la Colombière, and tell him from Me to do all in his power to establish this devotion and give this pleasure to My Heart. Let him not be discouraged by the difficulties he will meet, for there will be many, but let him remember that he is all-powerful who, distrusting himself, puts his whole confidence in Me.” Conscious of his own weakness, but strong in the strength of Christ, the servant went forth, and in spite of almost insuperable difficulties he laboured in the midst of schism, bigotry, and persecution to make known, and thus to make loved, the Heart of Jesus Christ. Nor did he labour in vain; in less than four months he had inspired a number of souls with a love for this devotion.

The Duchess of York learnt it from his lips and became for the rest of her life a zealous adorer of the Sacred Heart. It was she who, first among royalty, begged the Sovereign Pontiff to establish a solemn feast in Its honour, a step which would have given the sanction of the Church to the devotion. Father de la Colombière's difficulty did not lie with the Princess. Her natural disposition, no less than her early training, made her an apt pupil in the science of the love of the Heart both human and Divine, but it was another matter when dealing with the English Catholics. He found he had to deal with a race which was both reserved and conservative. English Catholics had suffered and died for the Faith that was dearer

to them than aught besides. Men and women had willingly—nay, cheerfully—borne poverty, imprisonment and torture, and had laid down their lives for the love of Christ. Even at the time of which we write they were on the brink of another persecution, so it is little wonder that this staunch band of faithful souls felt a little diffident at what seemed to them, at first, a new devotion.

But a new devotion it certainly was not; and no sooner had Catholics realized that the message sent to them was but a further revelation of Christ's love, than they welcomed it and cherished it as a source of strength and solace in their terrible trials.

Father de la Colombière, burning with the wish to accomplish the desires of Jesus Christ, preached the devotion with a zeal which made the field of his labours, vast though it was, seem all too narrow: "Why, O my God, cannot I proclaim everywhere what Thou dost desire from Thy servants and Thy friends?"

Our Lord had asked for a solemn feast in honour of His Heart. This was impossible in England at that time. A Bishop might have granted the right to inaugurate one in his diocese. But there were no Bishops—not even a Vicar Apostolic. England's beautiful cathedrals were in the hands of their despoilers. Canterbury, Westminster, York, Durham—all the stately fanes up and down the length and breadth of the land were bereft of their meaning, for the Lord for Whom they were built was no longer permitted to live in His temples under the Eucharistic veils. The Chapter of English priests had no power to establish even a local feast, and so the hands of the apostle of the Sacred Heart were tied. All he could do was to lead souls to know and love the devotion; to make known with great prudence in private interviews or in the confessional the practices for which Our Lord had asked, and to make the love of Christ known by his sermons. All this Father de la Colombière did. He never let slip an occasion in public or in private of exhorting the faithful to love the Sacred Heart. All his sermons were inspired by this thought, and we are able to trace the course of his work and see on what occasions

he was able to sow the good seed of the devotion in St. James's Court.

On the Feast of St. Francis of Sales, January 29th, 1677, he renewed his resolution of spreading the devotion in England. The season of Lent gave him the opportunity he desired. On Ash Wednesday he opened his course of sermons by a discourse on the following theme: "There has never been sorrow comparable to that of Jesus Christ in His Passion, because He had an infinite love for God and for men."

On the following Wednesday Father de la Colombière spoke of the Charity of Jesus Suffering—"charity which caused Him to suffer that which He ought not to have suffered, to suffer more than He ought to have suffered, and for men for whom He need not have suffered." In this way he prepared the hearts of his auditors to receive the message of the Sacred Heart. He spoke of the pleadings of this Divine Heart without actually putting them into words: "'Is it not too much?' cries the faithful soul. 'Yes,' replies Jesus, 'it is too much to appease My Father, more than sufficient to exterminate the hatred of My enemies, more than enough to efface all the sins of the world and to quench the flames of hell; but it is not enough to touch thy heart, not sufficient to inspire thee with the smallest sense of gratitude.'" And after having spoken at length of this love of Christ towards those who so little deserve it, he ends his sermon with these almost audacious words, which breathe forth all the confidence of one who was an intimate friend of the Sacred Heart: "How comes it, then, that I love Thee not, Thou who art so perfect, so great, so wise, so enlightened, so sweet, so bountiful, so faithful and so kind to all Thy friends? Pardon me, Lord, if I dare to tell Thee the reason. Thou hast not yet loved me sufficiently. Thou canst yet add something to the excess of Thy love for me. I know that Thou dost find obstacles in my heart, but I am sure that when I offer it to Thee empty, Thou wilt not refuse to fill it with Thy love, and to come Thyself to dispose it for this perfect charity with which it must burn for all eternity."

The third Wednesday of Lent in 1677 fell on the eve of the Feast of the Annunciation. Father de la Colombière thought

the moment had arrived when he might speak openly of the devotion of the Sacred Heart. The subject of his sermon was the patience of Jesus Christ suffering. He spoke of the moral beauty of Our Lord's sufferings, and invited his hearers to contemplate the Soul of Jesus, to gaze on His Sacred Face that they might fall in love with His virtues, and then He introduced them into the very Heart of Christ. "Enter into the Heart of the Son of God and see His dispositions as regards His enemies. Listen to the degrees of the incomparable sweetness of His love:

"1. All that He suffers from them does not prevent Him from excusing them. He knows that they are ignorant, and neither their envy, human respect, self-interest, hatred, pride nor injustice can prevent His kind Heart from looking at that which diminishes their sin, rather than at that which makes them culpable.

"2. Not only does Jesus excuse His murderers, but He is touched with a real compassion for them: He grieves over their blindness and the evils they are drawing down upon themselves. He says in His Heart: '*Quoniam si cognovisses et tu quæ ad pacem tibi!*'—If thou didst but know the things which are to thy peace!

"He considers all He suffers but little: '*Nolite flere super me*'—Weep not over Me.'

"3. He is touched with love for them. He feels the greatest compassion towards them, He prays, He suffers and He suffers lovingly. He desires to save them and He does so, for His prayer is not in vain. Those who were converted by St. Peter's sermons were these very people who had clamoured for His death.

"May the Heart of Jesus, then, be our school. Let us dwell in It during this Lent. Let us study Its movements and try to conform ourselves to it. Yes, divine Jesus, I wish to dwell in Thy Heart and to pour all my bitterness into It. Thy love will consume it all. I do not fear impatience when sheltered in Thy Heart. There I can keep silence; there I can become resigned to Thy Divine Will, and learn an invincible constancy. I beg Thee for Thy prayers, O sweet Jesus.

Thou didst offer them for Thy enemies; do not refuse them to me, for I desire to love Thee, and even to love Thy Cross and my enemies for the love of Thee."

These were the words of which Father de la Colombière made use in his first public sermon on the Sacred Heart in London. They paved the way for him to inculcate the duties of adoration, love, imitation, and reparation in the hearts of all who heard him.

On Good Friday he returns again to the subject: "The sorrows of Our Saviour were greater for His Heart than for His Body—His soul suffered far more intensely and bitterly." And then he goes on to speak of Our Lord's physical pains being almost a consolation to His Heart: "I feel sure that these exterior sufferings, far from equalling the others, were a remedy or at least a relief for His broken Heart. Do you think He minded the wounds which repaired the outraged glory of His Father? Rather, with what joy He must have seen sin destroyed by the destruction of His Flesh, reparation to God's glory made by the shedding of His Blood, His justice avenged, the world purified and reconciled to God, put back into a state in which it could honour the God Who created it. As soon as He saw the soldiers He rose and left His Apostles, allowing them to sleep as though He had no longer need of their consolation. Full of strength and intrepidity, He gives Himself up to those raging lions who seek Him, and He remains, until death, so calm in the midst of unheard-of cruelties that it seems certain that His torments served only to appease the sorrow of His Heart. O inconceivable sorrow! O incredible bitterness of the Heart of Jesus, which could make Him as though insensible to such cruel torments, and which could even find in them a kind of consolation."

Then the preacher enumerated the interior afflictions which pierced the Heart of Christ during His Passion: the injustice of His enemies, the ingratitude of the Jews, the infidelity of His Apostles, the entire loss of His reputation, the sacrilegious disdain with which He was treated, and His interior desolation which caused Him to cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" As a climax he spoke of the interior

sorrow of the Heart of Jesus at the sight of the uselessness of His sufferings to so many souls who would be for ever lost. And then He shows the anguish of the Sacred Heart by the cry: “ ‘O man, who are content to give but a passing glance at this torn Body pierced with nails, enter into My Heart and see if there be any sorrow like to Mine.’ No, Lord, no anguish can be compared to Thine. *Magna est velut mare contritio tua*—Great as a sea of sorrow. The affliction of Thy Heart is an ocean of sorrow, the mere sight of which terrifies me and weights me down with grief. Lord, I see that Thy greatest sufferings were those which are the least known, the least compassionated. What help could the compassion of Thy creatures be to Thee in Thy sufferings?—*Magna est velut mare contritio tua ; quis medebitur tibi ?* Yes, my God, it is on this interior Passion of Thine that I wish to meditate. It is upon this afflicted Heart that I wish to bestow all my tenderness. Above all, I wish to deplore with Thee those sufferings which men have rendered useless, and the little love with which they return Thy boundless love. Oh, Jesus, who can console this grief of Thine? If only we could save from Thy enemy the souls of which he would deprive Thee. Lord! we have each a soul, which up to this time has drawn little fruit from Thy sufferings. We will work to save it, so that Thou mayest not have the sorrow of seeing it perish with so many others. These thoughts will make us more fervent and more vigilant than the hope of Heaven or the fear of hell could do. My loving Jesus, we will apply ourselves to purify and sanctify our souls because they are the price of Thy Precious Blood, because they belong to Thee. They are dear to us because Thou dost love them. We will spare nothing, so that Thou mayest be spared the grief of losing them. O noble motive! worthy of a great and tender heart. In this way there can be nothing but sweetness in working out our salvation.” These are the words which moved the hearts of so many Catholics in the centre of London within the walls of the Chapel Royal of St. James’s Palace. Did they make an impression? Did they find an echo in the hearts of those who heard them? It will suffice to recall the praise bestowed upon English Catholics two years later

by the Venerable Pontiff Innocent XI., and to mention the letters in which the herald of the Sacred Heart speaks of his spiritual relations with a large number of these heroic souls.

After having thus unfolded the treasures of the Divine Heart to the faithful, Father de la Colombière often reminded them of the devotion. On the Feast of Corpus Christi, when speaking of the Holy Eucharist and bewailing the coldness of men towards their Saviour, he taught them to ask Our Lord to give them His Sacred Heart in place of their cold hearts.

In the following Lent, 1678, he captivated his audience by the way in which he spoke of the ineffable humility of the Heart of Christ. "*Ego autem sum vermis et non homo, opprobrium hominum et abjectio plebis*—I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people."

Father de la Colombière exhausted his strength during the Lent of 1678 and could not preach much afterwards. The infamous Titus Oates plot exposed the English Catholics to the risk of thinking that God had forgotten them. Persecution was renewed in all its fury. Then it was that more than ever the chaplain of St. James's Court offered to all a secure shelter in the Heart of Jesus. With what fervour, with what activity, did he not accomplish his mission! We can read it in his sermons and understand it more fully in recalling the testimony of his first biographer, Père Froment, S.J.: "The devotion of this saintly man to the Heart of Jesus and his zeal to enkindle it in the hearts of others were greatly increased by the lights he received from God concerning It during the retreat he made in London in 1677."

In London even more than in Paray the humble servant of God was ready to spend himself and to be spent to satisfy the desires of his Divine Master and to bring all hearts to the Source of life and holiness.

In 1679 a Franciscan priest, Father Wall, was imprisoned in Worcester Jail and hanged for his priesthood. Some interesting notices of this holy martyr have come down to us in the papers entitled, "Gervase Sacheverill: an Episode of the Seventeenth Century." Among these is an account of an interview between Father Wall and Father de la Colombière.

We give it as it stands, for though it may not be strictly accurate in detail, it gives a pleasing picture of these two holy men. The account is undoubtedly founded on fact:

“Just two years before (*i.e.*, 1676) the apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus had been sent over by his Superiors to visit the Court of the Duchess of York, in order to impart spiritual instruction to the numerous foreigners who had gathered around her in London. He came fresh from Paray-le-Monial, and was full of ardent zeal to propagate the beautiful devotion so lately revealed by Our Blessed Lord Himself to the holy nun of the Visitation. During two years he had preached those lessons of Divine love in the Chapel of St. James, and had kindled the sacred flame in many a breast amid the obloquy and persecution which overshadowed the Faith in England. Some few of our countrymen had contrived to slip in and hearken to his consoling discourses. They may have imbibed such fervour from the revelations he disclosed as to have enabled them to bear the terrible trials in store for them. The love of the Sacred Heart was no new doctrine. It had been revealed to the beloved disciple as he lay upon His Master's breast in the Cœnaculum, and was well known to St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and St. Gertrude; but it had recently been manifested with renewed lustre to the Blessed Margaret Mary in the chapel and the garden of the Convent at Paray.

“Father Wall had heard of the famous young Jesuit Father, and was prepared to meet one deeply versed in the science of Divine love; but when he found himself in the presence of the holy priest it seemed to him as if the Apostle St. John had reappeared on earth to rekindle those flames from the Heart of Jesus with which his writings abound. His calm and beautiful countenance was precisely such as one may picture that to be of the beloved disciple who stood beside the Cross when the lance pierced his Master's side and revealed the material tabernacle of His ardent Charity.

“‘Father,’ he said, ‘I am a poor Minorite of St. Francis, come to seek strength and counsel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of which you are known far and wide among us as the Apostle. Among the friends I longed to see in London is one of your

own Society, Father Turner, now a prisoner in Newgate, looking forward to the blessed crown of martyrdom. Had I not been called away by my Superiors, I should ere this have been in prison, with the certain prospect of a similar reward if God but granteth me the grace to merit it by my constancy.'

" 'My friend,' said Father de la Colombière, 'you have indeed come to the fount of graces for the strength you need, and yet none can probe the mysteries of His Heart without tasting of the cup of bitterness which He drained in the Garden of Gethsemane. Whosoever taketh up His Cross and followeth in His wake, though he gain a hundredfold even in this life in the way of consolations, must yet feel the sharp edge of persecution. Oh ! that I were granted this great grace which your English priests are reaping in this land of crosses; but God may yet have something in store for me.'

" 'Our Lord will not let you go hence, maybe, without much suffering,' replied Father Wall, 'but I foresee that your life will be spared to propagate this sweet Devotion and rekindle the flagging zeal in many hearts.'

" Thus communing, they spent together that day, which was the vigil of All Saints, 1678, in sweet converse on the love of Jesus; and it was not until after Father Wall had said Mass at the little Altar of the Sacred Heart, which Father de la Colombière had erected in his oratory, that they finally parted at dawn on the feast."

Such interviews as these must have been frequent between Father de la Colombière and all sorts and conditions of people, and great must have been his consolation when he found a ready response to the message of love which he transmitted to all on behalf of His Master and Lord.

CHAPTER XIX

Apostolic Work in London: 1676—1678

“His indefatigable devotedness towards the souls among whom God had sent him, is the measure of the love and esteem the Venerable Father de la Colombière had for English Catholics.”—PÈRE CHARRIER, S.J.

INFLAMED as he was with an ardent zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, the chaplain of the Duchess of York looked upon himself as the servant of all who had recourse to his ministry in those hours when his official duties did not claim his attention. In the Palace he was looked upon as and called “the Saint.” Everyone had the respect for him which is born of true sanctity. The members of the Court, the Duchess, the Duke, and the King, all spoke in his praise. As for himself, he was at the disposal of all—the humblest as the greatest—and apostates and heretics were equally welcomed by him if only they came in order to turn to God.

He heard the confessions of large numbers of Catholics; he received many heretics into the Church, especially one gentleman of high rank and another person of note who embraced the Catholic Faith together with his entire family. This gentleman of rank was probably Lord Castlemaine, whom Titus Oates afterwards accused of being a Jesuit, and who was sent to the Tower. Besides this he converted twenty-five apostates—men who had given up not only their faith but their religious vows. They all returned to their monasteries or to one of their houses abroad.

These were some of his good works, but we shall come across more in the accusations brought against him in the autumn of 1678. Many of his letters to Mère de Saumaise and others give us an insight into his works in London, and his own words are eminently worth recording.

About November 20th, 1676, he writes: “It is very distressing to see how the English are persecuted; they never hear

God spoken of, and are forbidden to hear Mass. It is assuredly a desolate state of things." And he goes on to recommend England to the prayers of those he had left behind in Paray.

In February, 1677, Father de la Colombière wrote to Mère de Saumaise, giving her a full account of an extraordinary event which had just taken place.

As we have seen, the Jesuit had a tender devotion to St. Francis of Sales, but in England the Saint was barely known, and his client expected St. Francis' Feast to pass unnoticed. But God had a consolation in store for him. "On the very day of the feast," he writes, "a man came to see me almost in despair. He was a physician who possessed a receipt for a wonderful plaster, which for thirty years had never failed in its effect on the invalids to whom it was applied. This plaster was of such efficacy that, no matter on what part it was applied, it never failed in reaching to the bone without need of lance or burning. This physician having been summoned by the King to cure one of the royal household, who for two years had been treated by others with no effect, had promised to cure the patient in two months. Hardly had he given this promise when the remedy completely lost its efficacy—not only did it not purify the flesh, but it caused corruption and a kind of gangrene. The doctor pretended that the invalid to whom the plaster was to be applied was not in a fit state to stand it; one day he excused himself on account of the weather, the next on some other pretext. He tried the plaster on different people and even on himself—it was useless; that which ought to have reached to the bone did not even graze the skin. He imagined other physicians had in some way meddled with the cure to render it useless. The poor man was heartbroken. He had promised to discover in twenty-four hours the disease in the bone of the child's leg. Everyone begged him to hasten the cure. He even had recourse to the exorcisms of the Church, but they had not the effect he hoped for. At last, towards evening on the Feast of St. Francis of Sales, he came to me. It was imperative that he should either dress the wound the next morning or go back upon his word. I advised him to make a vow in honour of the Saint whose feast it was. He did

so. The next morning he applied the plaster, after which he went to see his other patients, who were all better. The next day, on removing the bandage on the child's leg, he found that the cure had worked better than ever before, and from that time all went as well as possible. The physician went to Holy Communion in thanksgiving two days later, in great joy and gratitude, determined to do all in his power to serve God faithfully. I hope this account will make the great Saint known and revive a devotion towards him, for at present it is too little practised."

In a short time Father de la Colombière wrote enthusiastically of the fervour he found among many of the English Catholics:

"In truth, I never remember to have seen greater resolution and courage than that which I have remarked in two or three persons here whom God has sent me as a spur and an example." But all do not advance at the same rate, and he writes again: "Much of my work is among those who do not advance so quickly; indeed, their progress is exceedingly slow. I should certainly abandon the work if I did not hope for great fruit from their perfect conversion, and if I did not know that we should never tire of asking for graces such as these."

London sheltered many apostates at this time. Remorse brought a number of these to the feet of the apostle of the Sacred Heart. Father de la Colombière had been warned to be extremely careful in dealing with these souls. "It is true," he writes, "one has to take great precautions with these people, who have given up both the religious life and their faith; two or three, perhaps four, have taken me in, but thank God, for me it only meant loss of money."

Perhaps one of Father de la Colombière's greatest consolations during his life in London was in meeting, as he did, souls who were thirsting to immolate themselves as victims for God's glory in the religious life. He knew the crying need there was in England for souls who would devote themselves to saving souls and to calling down God's mercy on this unhappy country. France and Belgium had given shelter to many English Catholics who had joined the Benedictine or Carmelite Order, and now the Duchess of York, in conjunction with her holy

director, wished to establish in France a Convent of the Visitation Order for those Englishwomen who felt themselves drawn to that mode of religious life.

As early as November 20th, 1676, Father de la Colombière wrote to Mère de Saumaise: "The Duchess of York thinks of founding a Convent of your Order in Flanders for Englishwomen." A year later the project was still under consideration: "*November 25th, 1677.*—Efforts are still being made to found an English Convent of your Order, probably at Boulogne in Picardy. It seems that things are looking brighter now for this project than they have ever been." The foundation never took place. Several English ladies joined the Visitation nuns at Charolles and at Chaillot, and soon the political situation in England put an end to all idea of realizing such a project. The Convent could not have been founded at all without the consent of Louis XIV. Early in 1678 the relations between the Courts of England and France became strained, and it would have been impossible for the Duchess to ask any favour of the French King.

God had other designs. England, even in those dark days of religious intolerance, was not wholly without its religious women. A little band of valiant souls, spiritual daughters of that noble and holy woman, Mary Ward, were braving the risk of persecution, imprisonment, and even death, if need be, in order to keep alive the Faith in the hearts of Christ's little ones.

Mary Ward herself is too little known. Born in 1585, the days of her childhood and girlhood were the days of the fierce persecution of the latter half of the reign of Elizabeth. Mary knew that she had a call to the religious life, and, acting on the advice of others, she crossed over to France in 1606 to try her vocation to the contemplative life in the Convent of the Poor Clares at Gravelines. "Finding this was not what God desired, she returned to her native land in 1609, and there began to labour for the salvation of souls among rich and poor, strengthening Catholics in the Faith, reclaiming the lapsed, helping and comforting all in her wonted mild, sweet manner." Here some devoted companions joined her and together they

passed over to St. Omer, where after years of prayer and penance Mary at length saw that it was God's Will that she should found an Institute in which the members should earnestly labour for their own perfection and for the education of children of their own sex, under the Rule of St. Ignatius, as far as this could be practised by women. What Mary Ward and her faithful companions had to suffer will never be fully known. "Trials, opposition, persecution, failure—all these came, but doubt as to God's Will regarding her Institute—never." The Ursulines had some educational establishments on the Continent which were doing successful work, but all Convents at that time were strictly enclosed, and the child entering a convent as a pupil was as bound to enclosure as the nuns themselves. Thus day schools were impossible, and there were few parents who were able or willing to send their children away, as it were, for good. Mary wanted her Institute to be free from enclosure so that it might meet the needs of the time. This was deemed a dangerous innovation, and Mary's enemies never rested until they saw the destruction of her work. In 1631 a Bull of Suppression was signed, the ten flourishing houses of the Institute were dissolved, its schools broken up, and the two or three hundred women who composed it disbanded and sent adrift on the world. Nor must this surprise us. No middle course was open to the Roman authorities. They had either to approve the Institute or suppress it, and God's time had not come for its triumph. Under these circumstances the Institute was suppressed for a time, but its work was not wrecked. In 1632 Pope Urban VIII. called Mary and her companions to Rome. "We are glad that they should come," he said, "and we will take them under Our protection." And so, under the supervision and protection of the Apostolic See, the Institute revived and developed, following the general lines of the first scheme.

Mary Ward was a pioneer, and God gave her full measure, not only of the virtues, but of the trials of a pioneer. Other Foundresses of Religious Orders for teaching came later; they reaped where Mary Ward and her faithful few had sown.

In 1639, with letters of introduction from Pope Urban to

Queen Henrietta Maria, Mary returned to England and stayed in London. There her scattered English companions gathered round her once more. To all outward appearances the London house of the Institute was an ordinary dwelling, and Mary and its other inmates were people of the world like their neighbours. In 1642 Mary left London and founded a house in her native county, Yorkshire. She died at York in 1645, but her work lived on. The London house in St. Martin's Lane continued as far as possible the work of the education of children. In 1686 Mother Frances Bedingfield founded the house of the Institute in York, where from that day to this, in spite of persecution, imprisonment, and numberless vicissitudes, the daughters of Mary Ward have carried on the traditions of their Mother and taught countless souls to value their Faith more than aught besides. But it was the small house in London which is connected with the biography of the Venerable Claude de la Colombière.

From the outset the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, founded by Mary Ward, has been connected with the Society of Jesus. Its rule is adapted from that of St. Ignatius, and Mary had always had some of the Society among her staunchest friends, so it is not surprising to find that the Jesuit chaplain at St. James's and the nuns of the Institute who formed the London Community in 1677 and 1678 should have got into touch. One of the accusations brought against Father de la Colombière at the time of his arrest was of having had relations with these nuns: "La Colombière told me that there were several women living a monastic life in a house not far from St. Paul's."

That this accusation *does* refer to the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary seems certain, seeing that there were no other nuns living in London at the time. In more than one letter Father de la Colombière refers to them. Writing to his brother at the end of July, 1677, he exclaims: "Oh, what holy women I have met here! If I could only tell you of their manner of life, you would be astonished."

But the times were too dangerous to allow more than a very few to join the Community in St. Martin's Lane. By far the

greater number of those who had vocations to the religious life joined one of the Convents on the Continent, where they could serve God in peace.

Father de la Colombière's interest was by no means confined to those already leading the religious life. Great was his joy when he found souls ready to serve God with perfection. How prudently he guided them may be judged from the following letter: "*December 3rd, 1677.*—At the Court here there is a young widow of about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age, who amid the almost universal corruption has preserved her reputation unblemished, although her beauty and wit have exposed her to great temptations. This lady, who is of the highest rank, never fails to come to my sermons, and even sheds tears during them in front of everyone. She frequently feels drawn to give herself up completely to the service of God; sometimes, even, she thinks of leaving everything, but she is rich and much sought after, and she cannot yet make up her mind to lead a devout life. She has a good heart, and I urge her on as much as I can. She listens to me with pleasure, but I do not think she advances much. She admires virtue, but she lacks courage to embrace it finally. My visits to her are great acts of self-denial, but I shall continue them because I have felt similar repugnance in dealing with other souls who have afterwards turned completely to God. If this lady gave herself to God, she would be a shining example, for assuredly there is no other woman at the Court who can be compared with her in mental or physical gifts." It is not certain who this widow was, but probably she was the lady whom Courtin, the French Ambassador, writing on February 4th, 1677, calls Madame Baucley. "She is," he says, "the sister of the Duchess of Richmond, who has been brought up in France, and who, after Madame Middleton, is the most beautiful woman in England." This seems to tally with Father de la Colombière's description of her beauty. She was certainly of "high rank," for she was a member of the Stuart family and a cousin of Charles II. "Brought up in France," she could easily follow the French sermons given in the Chapel Royal. She appears to have frequented the French Embassy,

and would there meet all the most brilliant members of the English and French Courts, including the Duchess of Portsmouth, which proves that she had not as yet "renounced the world and its vanities." It was eleven weeks later than February, 1677, that Father de la Colombière wrote of her as we have seen. Her complete conversion did not take place until the Easter of 1678, for at that time her director speaks of her in another letter: "I have great hope that after Easter I may see the lady about whom I have been so anxious treading the narrow way. During my last conversation with her at her house, she wept bitterly at her resistance to the Will of God, assuring me that she believed that the vanity of the world had never been more clearly shown to anyone. She has indeed a finely tempered soul joined to rare gifts of body, mind, and fortune; her example would be a strong incentive to many people." A fortnight later he returns to the subject: "Yesterday I was again with the lady of whom I spoke to you. Strangely enough, the devil employs to her spiritual injury a certain false respect to the Body of Our Lord, which so deters her from Holy Communion, that it is the one thing she dreads in a devout life. When I required her to receive Holy Communion at least every fortnight for three months, her distress was so great that I was really sorry for her. She implored me to believe that nothing I could ask of her would be so painful as this. But I held my ground and she gave me her promise. I do not know how it is she hesitates. She is only held back by delusions, for her detachment from the things of this world is now quite wonderful. One can almost feel the fear the devil has of her entire conversion; he alone opposes it now."

Five more months were to elapse before the victory was won, and it was only on September 19th, 1678, that Father de la Colombière was able to announce the final conquest of this soul: "At last the Duchess of whom I have so often told you is completely converted. Just lately God sent her a short but severe illness of twenty-four hours, during which she was filled with such regret for not having given herself entirely to God that she nearly died of grief. I hope that she will now

lead a life which will give great glory to God. She has in her the makings of a saint."

It was not always that so much time was needed to bring souls to take up the yoke of Christ. On January 31st, 1678, Father de la Colombière sent the following note to Mère de Saumaise: "Lately God has given me a great consolation in the conversion of a widow of high rank, not the same person of whom I wrote to you before. I complained of the slowness of the last. This one gave me no trouble. The work was done in a single conversation. May God be eternally blessed!" However, Father de la Colombière, who shared equally in spiritual gifts with St. Margaret Mary, could have no joy without its bitterness, and he suffered much on account of this soul. At first she was flooded with consolations, but the cross was to come. "God gave her at first inexpressible consolations . . . but to-day she suffers terribly. I have never seen anything like it. The devil is doing his utmost to make her fail in courage, but Our Lord sustains her in a wonderful way."

Father de la Colombière himself was suffering intensely at this time, and it certainly is not surprising that one who was bringing so many souls to God should be constantly harassed by the enemy of all good. But it was not from the devil alone that he had to suffer. God had warned him that even persons consecrated to God would oppose him and take umbrage at his sermons. St. Margaret Mary, as we have seen, received from Heaven the commission to warn him of this, and to counsel him as to the manner of bearing such criticism. All that had been predicted was exactly fulfilled at the time of the almost instantaneous conversion of the widow. Father de la Colombière tells us of it, and of how the advice was renewed by St. Margaret Mary just at the time it was most necessary. "Thank God, I remembered it at once. It helped me greatly to be constant, for I was tempted to give it all up for fear of the renown which appeared to scandalize people and make them fail in charity." What the precise objections brought against him were we do not know. Nor have we any means of discovering who the "person consecrated to God" was. But all this opposition proves that the Sacred Heart allowed His

apostle to gain his victories only by struggle and suffering so that they might merit a still greater reward.

Like St. Francis of Sales, Father de la Colombière seems to have had a special gift for directing the souls of people of the highest rank in the paths of perfection. This gift was necessary for the position he held; but it would be a great mistake to infer that he did not work equally willingly and equally devotedly for those in a more humble station.

"The would-be postulant of whom I wrote to you," he says on May 9th, 1678, "is marvellously constant, and in spite of all the temptations which trouble her, she leaves home with the firm resolution of dying a religious, even if her troubles continue all her life. She is twenty years of age and has no parents. Her mother died like a Saint, with no desire greater than to see her daughter become a nun. I feel sure she will obtain this grace for her."

In times of great religious crisis God is wont to inspire certain souls with the desire for extraordinary sacrifices. Father de la Colombière met more than one such chosen victim:

"*June 27th, 1678.*—There is a young widow here of about thirty years of age; she is well educated but poor, her health is delicate, but she has plenty of courage. For a year past she has felt interiorly urged to retire into some desert and lead a penitential life. After having often rejected her proposal as useless, she at last told me that she feels so strongly drawn to that manner of life that she begged me to consider it, for fear that in resisting her I should resist the Will of God. Seeing her so determined, I thought that perhaps she might do something more feasible if she really wanted so to serve God. I then proposed that she should go to some Convent as a lay-sister, where she might look after the animals in the farm or do some other work of the sort, without making herself known to anyone. Some of the Saints have given us an example of this. I suggested this really to try her, and to maintain her fervour, rather than with any thoughts of her really doing such a thing. But the idea pleased her. She begged me to help her to accomplish it, and I told her I would think about it. She is a Frenchwoman, and I have known her for a year and a half.

Up to this time she has always been obedient, and has striven hard to overcome herself. She is quick-tempered, but for the last eighteen months she has struggled against this defect. I have often put her extraordinary courage to the proof. Do tell me what you think of it all. Do you think God wishes to renew in our day the example of those great souls who lived in the early days of Christianity? I shall await your answer after you have consulted God about it."

Mère de Saumaise replied to this letter on July 6th, and the widow left immediately for France. "She is going to the Ursulines at Paray, where they have promised her a place as a lay-sister. I have not told them who she is, nor have I any intention of ever doing so. If by chance you wish to detain her on the road, I have told her to obey you." The Director then goes on to explain his wise reasons for the decision he has come to with regard to what appeared to be so extraordinary a vocation: "I shall not make her known to anyone at all, because it seems to me that this would spoil the designs of God in calling her to a life of humility and entire concealment."

The person in question called at Dijon, where Mère de Saumaise then was. The holy Superior thought highly of her interior dispositions and let her pursue her way to Paray. We shall meet her again when Father de la Colombière finds himself once more in that town.

In a letter dated September 19th of that same year, 1678, we find an account of a very similar vocation, only this time it is a question of a young tradesman about twenty-four years of age:

"About two months ago a young man came to see me to consult me about a plan he had formed for leaving his native land and going to some foreign country where he would beg his bread and live a life of great austerity. He was in robust health, and thought he was quite strong enough for such an enterprise. I warned him not to be in a hurry, and told him that I should have to know him better before I could advise him on such an important subject. Since then I have tested his docility, and he has got to love obedience so much that he makes it his chief study. He is no longer anxious about his

plan or his future, and is intent wholly on advancing in virtue. Our Lord has already raised him to a high degree of prayer. This gift of prayer increases day by day, together with such special lights on the practice of the highest virtues, that I am lost in admiration at it."

A little later and the holy Jesuit writes of another person who wished to enter a Convent, and, strange to say, it is again a widow. In spite of the number of people Father de la Colombière advised or encouraged to enter the religious life, no one could accuse him of precipitation or bias. He took the greatest care to treat each soul separately and according to its needs. "I have under my direction another widow, a very sensible woman, who for the last year and a half has been treading the path of great self-abnegation, and for whom I can thoroughly answer. She wants to enter some Visitation Convent far away from Paris. She has good health. She received her education in a convent in France. Her father is a Frenchman and physician to the Queen of England. She has a little girl of nine years of age whom she would like to place as a boarder in a convent where she could afterwards enter as a nun if it so pleased God. Where shall I send them to? I should like to hand them over to you. They are quite ready, and I am sure you will be pleased with them."

It was among such Catholics as these that Father de la Colombière found large scope for his zeal; and the details of his direction show as much of his own character. His public ministry was hardly less interesting. His preaching, his fervour, and his virtues quickly drew to him all souls of goodwill, besides manifesting his sanctity. By the end of 1677, one year after his arrival in England, he had already reaped an abundant harvest. "I have," he says, "many good works on hand, all of which concern either the conversion or the sanctification of souls. Every day I see new and great effects of God's grace in souls. I received to-day the abjuration of a lady who used to be extremely obstinate, and it is hardly a week since I received another. But what most rejoices me is the number of souls in whom God works marvels of perfection.

Praise Him for it, I beg of you. I could write a volume on God's mercies to me since I came here."

The following Lent, 1678, was a period of unremitting labour. "Lent has not hurt me, although I have certainly worked hard." But the work did not cease with the Feast of Easter. "At present it seems to me that I am reaping, but it is hardly less work than sowing: both on account of the large number of persons to whom one has to write* or to whom interviews have to be accorded, and also because of the difficulties we have to put up with. One requires a great grace from God to suffer patiently the persecutions and new troubles which the devil raises in souls whom God would draw to Himself."

Six days later he writes to ask Mère de Saumaise to pray much for the chosen souls whom God had reserved for Himself in this city of London, and then he tells her that he has the greatest hopes of doing good: "I have actually five persons coming to see me with the intention of abjuring heresy. Two have been religious, two others are French girls, and the fifth a young Englishman." The spiritual state of souls seems to have been the only cause of his sadness or his joy. On June 17th, 1678, a day which was afterwards to become the Feast of the Sacred Heart, he shares his joy with his friend in Dijon: "All the souls whom God has confided to my direction advance by His mercy, and it is true that there are three or four who give themselves to Him quite without reserve, and are all that I could wish."

These months were the time of a golden harvest before the violent storm raised by the enemy who was raging to destroy even the remnants of the Catholic Faith in England.

On July 12th he writes again: "We kept the Feast of the Visitation. Thank God, it was fairly well celebrated considering the country we are in. Among many who came to Holy Communion were two young ladies about twenty years of age, who had chosen that day to consecrate themselves to God by a vow of perpetual chastity, after having made a general

* This proves that Father de la Colombière kept up a correspondence with a large number of English people. He was in touch with the highest families who frequented the Court. Is it not possible that many of these letters have been preserved in their archives?

confession. One of them already receives great graces from God. Two young widows wanted to join them, but I told them to wait until the Assumption. Every day God sends me chosen souls who give themselves up to Him with the utmost generosity. I have just been speaking to three others who are thinking of the religious life, and not long ago there were two more. I foresee the beginning of a great work for God."

Again and again in his letters Father de la Colombière speaks of his confidence in the future: "I have the highest hopes of the advance of the good cause in times to come." And to his brother Humbert: "In the midst of all the corruption of heresy in this town, I find fervour and the practice of the most heroic virtue, a great harvest ready to fall under the hand of whoever God sends to gather it."

Father de la Colombière loved the English Catholics and the land which for so many centuries had been the "Island of Saints" and the "Dowry of Mary." In one of his sermons, after speaking of the hardness of some Christians being worse than that of the Jews, he exclaims:

"Poor England! Unhappy England! Thou art an example of the truth of the saying, 'The abuse of grace leadeth to obduracy!' For upon what country in the days of yore did Heaven more abundantly shower her blessings? to what people was ever given greater zeal for faith, deeper reverence for the Church? Amongst the great kings who have governed thee, how many have renounced their crowns for the love of Jesus Christ! Who can count the number of princes and princesses who have given thee an example of evangelical poverty and chastity? Some amongst them I find who have carried these virtues into the married state. Thy cities have brought forth martyrs to the Saviour of the world. Thy Universities have given us pontiffs full of zeal and holiness. The number of thy religious nearly equalled the rest of the population; thou wert almost one large monastery, so eager were thine inhabitants either to found religious houses or to dwell within them. I will not dwell on the honour paid to the Mother of God by the Englishmen of other days, nor speak of their devotion to the Queen of Angels, so great that England

was called the 'Dowry of Mary.' It is well known that thou wert the first to raise the standard of the Immaculate Conception; that it was to thee that the Queen of Heaven gave the miraculous scapular, the defence and privilege of all who wear it. It suffices to say that the ocean was powerless to set limits to thy faith, which spread beyond the seas. There are whole kingdoms who acknowledge thee for their mother in Jesus Christ, for it was thy children who gained them to the Catholic Church."

Then the preacher goes on to look for the cause of the fall of England from the Faith and to beg God to send a remedy:

"The diminution of religious zeal had its origin in the natural weakness and infirmity of man. The nation was gradually corrupted by the wealth of its trade with countries abounding in gold and silver, as well as with avarice and luxury. Could the decline of faith coupled with a soft and voluptuous style of living fail to draw down the anger of God? Can we mistake the terrible effects of God's wrath in the thick darkness of doubt which envelops the land, in the shock of rival creeds, the widespread diversity of belief, of feeling and opinion which sow enmity between town and town, village and village, and even between members of the same family? Do we not see the effect of His anger in that multitude of sects, each reviling the other, wherein doubt is for ever triumphant and confidence altogether wanting, in which most men have little religion and many none at all? I make no personal allusions, but if there be but one road to Heaven, it is clear that under a system in which each seeks a path for himself many will go astray to their eternal loss. My God, when will Thy justice be satisfied, when will Thy avenging hand be stayed? Can it be that Thou shouldst look unmoved on so many perishing souls? Show us how we may turn aside Thine anger and once again be reunited in the fold wherein for thirteen or fourteen centuries we dwelt in the light of Thy countenance."

As we read these words the ardour of the holy French Jesuit must surely kindle our own zeal for the conversion of our native land. Shall the blood of our countless martyrs be shed in vain?

“ Fair the fields over all our country;
 Lift your eyes and behold the land—
 White already unto the harvest,
 Waiting but for the reaper’s hand:
 Hark ! the Lord of the harvest calling,
 Rich the grain, but the labourers few.
 None will help Me, My sheaves to garner,
 (English Catholics) I look to you.”

S. M. XAVIER, S.N.D.

After the Lent of 1677 Father de la Colombière’s health gave grave cause for alarm, and about the Feast of the Assumption of the same year he had a bad attack of hæmorrhage. He thought he would be obliged to give up his post and return to France, and writes under this impression:

“ The permission of my Superiors having been obtained, I was on the point of returning to France, when a fresh loss of blood from the lungs brought me nearly to the verge of the grave. Now the doctors forbid me to move, saying that I am more likely to get well here. I do not know what God has in store for me, whether I am to live or die, to remain or to return, to preach or to be silent. I have scarcely strength to write or speak, barely to pray. I see around me a whitening harvest; never has there seemed to me so rich a promise of souls, but I am powerless. God’s Will be done. I am unworthy to serve Him.”

The attack passed, and with renewed health Father de la Colombière continued his work, but it was only for a time. On Easter Sunday, 1678, the hæmorrhage recommenced. Again it passed, but his chest was so weak that he was scarcely able to continue his sermons in the Chapel Royal until September, and expected every day to receive orders to return to France. A note from St. Margaret Mary changed his opinion. He writes to Mère de Saumaise: “ *September 19th, 1678.*—What makes me think I shall yet be here for some time, is that fresh harvests present themselves to be gathered, and that Sister Alacoque prepared me for a continuation of my work. I received your letter and the note you sent me from her the very day I had seen the doctor, and was feeling so weak and low that I seemed to have little strength for the work I foresee

in the coming year, and I looked upon my illness as an interposition of Providence, Who, seeing my incapacity for the task, was about to withdraw me from this country. For this I was prepared, but having read the note exhorting me not to lose courage on account of the difficulties before me, and to remember that he who trusts in God is all-powerful, I began to think otherwise, and to believe that I shall stay on here."

It was indeed God's Will that His servant should suffer still greater things for the glory of His Name. Another bitter persecution of the Catholics was about to sweep over the land, and Father de la Colombière, in return for his devotedness to the cause of religion in England, was arrested, imprisoned, and banished from the land. This was the reward of one who so short a time before had said: "Since I came to England, I can never think of the number of its perishing souls without feeling my heart transpierced with grief." Truly one would require a heart of stone or bronze not to be softened at the sight of such devotion.

CHAPTER XX

Private Correspondence

"In revealing the thoughts which animated him, he revealed the beauty of his soul."—PÈRE CHARRIER, S.J.

IT must not be imagined that the stress of work Father de la Colombière found in England made him forget those he had left behind in France. He seems to have kept up an enormous correspondence. Many of his letters have come down to us. Some of those he wrote while in England are given here, as they give us an admirable picture of the writer as brother, friend, religious, and apostle. They have a charm all their own. The first letter he received after his arrival in England was from his sister. His answer was characteristic:

"I left France without regret, for I knew I should find God in England, since it was He Who called me there. If anything had been capable of making me sad at leaving it would have been the thought that I was going far away from you, not that the affection we have for each other makes me desire to see you—I would go all my life without this pleasure, however great, if I knew that the sacrifice I should make in doing so could be of some use to your perfection—but I thought that if we had a chance of seeing one another occasionally, we should be able to urge each other on to try and become worthy of the vocation to which God has called us. I do so fear, my dear sister, that what we do in God's house should not correspond to the desire we showed to enter it."

He then goes on to recall to her mind the sanctity of the Order to which she belongs, and to warn her against tepidity. The letter ends: "Make yourself worthy of God's favours by refusing to give in to nature either interiorly or exteriorly."

The next is to his eldest brother, Humbert, written at the end of July, 1677:

"Distance is not the cause of my not having written, but simply that I have very little news to give you. It seems to

me, when I am not too occupied and I have something to say, that I am willing to write. Joseph [his brother] writes very rarely, I expect from the same reason, so I bear him no malice. I am delighted to be the first to be forgotten, now that he is about to give himself entirely to God. I pray that Our Lord may give him the grace to forget everything—even himself. When we begin to relish God as we really should, there is very little space left in the heart for creatures; not much even in the memory. All is occupied, for He fills all things. I can only hope that you feel the same about this amidst all the occupations Divine Providence has laid on you. Although I love you tenderly, I would willingly consent to be effaced from your memory, if it was to make place for Jesus Christ, Who alone deserves your love. My kindest remembrances to Madame de la Colombière. What holy women I know here! If I were to tell you of their manner of life, you would be astonished. Perhaps I should be, too, if you were to tell me of my sister's virtues. Our sister the nun does not write to me at all now. Provided that she become a Saint, I will consent with all my heart never to hear from her, for I only desire to have news of her that I may learn that she is corresponding to the vocation God has given her, and which she followed at first so courageously. I pray God to shower His blessing on your family, that His peace and His fear may reign therein, and that He Himself may reign among you by the perfect submission you all have to His Will.

“Good-bye, my dear brother; pray much for me.”

To his brethren in religion Father de la Colombière was no less kind. Quite a young Jesuit had written to him, and he replies:

“Continue, my dear child, your efforts to become a holy religious. I pray every day that Our Lord may give you this grace. If I knew there was anything better in the world I would wish it for you, and I would try to obtain it for you at the price of my life. But the more I know, the more I am persuaded that it is a great misfortune to amuse ourselves with what pleases us here below, as we can apply both our time and our mind to sanctify ourselves by the practice of humility

and entire detachment from ourselves. Do pray that I may first do well myself what I see and ask others to do."

To Mademoiselle de Lyonne, as we have seen, he wrote often, sometimes consoling her for his absence by such words as "I bless you a thousand times," or "I offer you to Our Lord every day in the Holy Mass."

Two other ladies at Paray whom he had led to embrace a life of perfection in the world received between them more than thirty of Father de la Colombière's letters. These two sisters were the Demoiselles Catherine and Marie Mayneaud de Bisefranc. The letters form an admirable series of instructions for people living a single life in the world. All is thought of and regulated: the use of time, daily meditation, reception of the Sacraments, filial submission to authority, a certain degree of poverty, resignation to God's Will, and great charity to others. It is noteworthy that in treating the subject of charity Father de la Colombière makes special mention of charity to one's brothers.

The nuns of the Ursuline Convent at Paray come in for a large share of his solicitude. One of the religious had written to him and had expressed a great love for her Community: "I will help you with all my heart," he responds, "and if my life were necessary, I would willingly sacrifice it." Another of the nuns complained that she had too much to do. He writes:

"I might with truth complain as well as you of overwork in my employment. No doubt solitude would be more agreeable to me. But I would rather die than say a single word to obtain relief. And though I have hardly an hour a day to think of God, I should consider it a great illusion to take this pretext of withdrawing from the guidance of Divine Providence, to which I have abandoned myself to such a degree that it has become my happiness. It is neither retreats nor long prayers which make Saints, but the sacrifice of our own will even in the holiest things, and a constant clinging to the Will of God, which is made known to us by our Superiors."

Another Ursuline asked him why he had not left her a rule of life for her guidance.

"I did not leave you any rules because you have one which leaves nothing unsaid, and which contains all religious perfection. It was not a man who gave you this Rule, you hold it from God Himself; and if you observe it exactly, it is impossible for you not to attain soon to great perfection. Your rules tell you practically everything you have to do."

To another:

"You have not what is necessary? My dear Sister, how I envy your happiness, and how willingly I would change places with you! I would not say this to everyone, but I know to whom I am writing."

And again:

"A soul which is not submissive in all things like a child is exposed to all the artifices of the devil, which never have deceived and never will deceive a truly obedient soul. As for me, I make such account of this virtue that all the others appear to me nothing if not guided by obedience. I know that the efforts I have made to practise it has been the happiness of my life, and that I owe to it all the graces I have ever received from God. I would rather renounce every sort of mortification, prayers and good works, than diverge in a single point, I do not say from the Ten Commandments, but even from the will of those who govern me, as far as I can see this will. O my God, how can I have a single moment of repose if I do my own will? How can I live, even though in other ways I should live happily, if I am not sure that what I do is pleasing Thee? And how can I help doubting when what I do is not either ordered or approved by my Superiors? I say approved, sanctioned and found good, for one can extort permissions and believe one is doing wonders, when all the time one has forced the Superior to accommodate herself to our fervour!"

To Mother Rousseau des Anges, assistant to the Superior of the Ursulines at Paray, Father de la Colombière wrote as follows:

"*July 12th, 1677.*—Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake. I pity those who thwart you in your good works, but I cannot hate them. God does not give the same graces to everyone. The day will come, perhaps, when those

who are not docile will rival the most fervent. Remember me to the three dear Sisters Lafin, and beg them from me to be always as fervent as when I saw them, and to remember that to be happy in this world and in the next, and to serve God as He deserves to be served, we must belong to Him without reserve. . . . Yours always in the Heart of Jesus. . . .”

Some of the Visitation nuns at Paray wrote to him every month. Only a few of his answers still exist, but they are full of sound advice to those suffering interior trials and in special trouble:

At the time for the Carnival he wrote to one such suffering soul:

“Try to imagine, my dear daughter, that you are a victim for the people. Take upon yourself, for the love of God, all the disorders which are now committed in the world, and, in order to expiate them, do not confine yourself merely to accepting your interior trials, but offer yourself to endure still more.”

To another he wrote:

“Every movement of the soul which troubles it or which weakens in it the hope of acquiring holiness is infallibly from the devil. I am delighted that you have such a love for your vocation. I do not know whether you have realized that the best sign of such love is the fact of there not being a single rule, however small, which one does not wish to observe as exactly as one’s vows.”

The letter ends with a thought on humility: “The more common sense I acquire, the more I see how ridiculous was my too great confidence in myself. The more light I get by experience and by the study of myself, the more easy I find it to be humble and to practise that admirable simplicity which renounces its own views and its own interests to obey both God and man.”

CHAPTER XXI

Letters to St. Margaret Mary and Mère de Saumaise

"I receive only too much consolation from your letters . . . it seems to me that I have need of this help."—FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

DURING the two years that Father de la Colombière spent in England he wrote to no one more frequently than he did to Mère de Saumaise, the Superior of the Convent at Paray and the close friend of St. Margaret Mary. All the intercourse between the confidant of the Sacred Heart and His zealous apostle was carried on by the intermediary of Mère de Saumaise. She transmitted the notes or messages of the humble nun to their mutual friend and director, and on his side Father de la Colombière sent his communications through the same channel.

Mère de Saumaise wrote frequently and regularly to England, and it is much to be regretted that the answers she received concerning the direction of her own soul have never been printed, with one only exception, which treats of her difficulties in prayer. In these letters to Mère de Saumaise, Father de la Colombière gives us not a few details concerning his own soul and the difficulties he met with during his life at the English Court.

A month after his arrival, he declares that he is already as much accustomed to English life as if he had been born in London. He thanks the nuns at Paray for the remembrance they "deign to have of him in their prayers," and hopes they will continue it, "for," he says, "I have an extreme need of it, and I shall certainly be most grateful for it."

The Visitation Convent at Paray was dear to him beyond all others, and he delights to hear that the retreat of the autumn of 1676 has greatly increased the fervour of the Community. He sends a special message to two of them whom he knew better than the others. "They will be miserable if they fall off; I would rather know that they were dead than that they had

fallen away. But I do not think that, after the graces they have received from God, they will separate themselves from Him."

He heard that Père Reybaud, S.J., who had succeeded him at Paray, had preached a beautiful sermon on the Feast of St. Francis of Sales: "It gives me much pleasure to know that you are satisfied," he writes. "I pray God that he may be able to make up to you for all my deficiencies."

To Mère de Saumaise herself he wrote: "Do not think that my having been sent far from you is a sign of God's anger towards you. I have often told you that He may do what He likes with me, in order to save you. And do not fear, either, that I shall ever refuse you the small services you have a right to ask of me. I will serve you to the end. I never say Mass without asking God to load you with His mercies. Please ask the same grace for me, and ask that my faults, however great and frequent, may never make me despair of His Goodness. That, to my mind, is the worst evil that can befall a creature. If we can only defend ourselves against that evil, there is nothing that cannot be turned to good and from which it is not easy to draw great blessings."

A little later he sent, through Mère de Saumaise, two messages of consolation, one to St. Margaret Mary, the other to Madame de Maréchalle. It is interesting to note the different view he took of the trials of one and the other—the nun, far advanced on the path of perfection, and the lady of the world.

Of the first he writes: "All you tell me of good Sister Alacoque fills me with joy. How admirable is God in His Saints! I cannot regret her sufferings. It seems to me that blows received from the hand of God are a thousand times sweeter than caresses from the hands of men."

Madame de Maréchalle is sympathized with and advised: "I am afraid she must expect many crosses and will have need of a great store of strength and constancy."

Mère de Saumaise herself sent words of consolation and encouragement to her spiritual Father. In his humility and gratitude he feared that the consolation he received was too

great: "I receive only too much consolation from your letters," he wrote; and when Mère de Saumaise reassured him, he answered: "I thank Our Lord that, in His infinite kindness, He approves of the consolation your letters give me. I hope I shall profit by them. It seems to me that I need this help."

The time for Mère de Saumaise to lay down her office as Superior at Paray came whilst Father de la Colombière was in London. He wrote her a long letter just before she left for Dijon: "I place all the interests of the dear Sisters you are leaving in the hands of Him to Whom they belong. Your presence has been a great blessing to them, and I thank you a thousand times for all your goodness to them and for the good news you give me of them. . . . You quite converted me on the subject of my health, and you have made me wish to preserve it for the good of my neighbour. I certainly require health for the work God has given me to do. Try to work the same change in me as regards my soul, either by your letters or your prayers: for, as you know well, I have still more need of virtue, as I come in contact with all sorts of people and have so little time for recollection. You are right, Reverend Mother, in envying me my opportunities of urging others to love God; but you know that one's heart should be full of love so that it may overflow on those to whom one speaks, and you know, too, that the sins of the man whom God uses as an instrument are a great obstacle to His designs. It is not that I do not think myself extremely happy to have been chosen for such a work. But I fear, with reason, that my faults hinder more conversions than my zeal gains. However, I will go on confidently in spite of my just fears and the fatigue my work entails, for there are more crosses, both interior and exterior, than one would think. From the moment one feels inspired by God to work for the sanctification of a soul, to the time when one has placed that soul in a certain degree of safety, there are many trials to be gone through. It is true that there are also great consolations, especially in seeing the working of grace and its progress in the heart, in the goodness of God, His patience, tenderness, and admirable prudence, His power, and

a hundred other things which console those who reflect upon them, and fill one's heart and soul with joy. May Our Lord continue to fill you with His blessings and give you the grace to leave behind you in your monastery His spirit, so that it may remain there for ever."

When Mère de Saumaise had gone to Dijon, Father de la Colombière thanked her again for all that she had done for him and for the nuns at Paray:

"I have to thank you a thousand times for all you have done for me. I do not know if I shall ever be happy enough to prove my gratitude to you, but assuredly God has given me much for all your kindness."

In July, 1678, Father de la Colombière tells Mère de Saumaise that he thinks her stay at Dijon is only to give her a rest before undertaking new work; the letter ends: "I hope we shall love God *without reserve* wherever He may please to place us. This is all I desire for you and for myself, who am entirely yours in the Heart of Jesus Christ."

We must now see how St. Margaret Mary helped her holy director and was in turn helped by him during the years between November, 1676, and January, 1679. All the messages went through Mère de Saumaise. In the first place we have a letter dated November 20th, 1676, in which Father de la Colombière writes to Mère de Saumaise about the advice he had received from St. Margaret Mary on his departure for England. The text of the note of advice has been given in Chapter XVII.:

"Nuns of the Visitation are not to be found here, and much less a Sister Alacoque; but God is to be found everywhere if one seeks Him. I thank Him with all my heart for keeping me in the remembrance of that holy religious. I do not doubt that her prayers draw down great graces on me, but I fear I do not profit by them as I ought. I will try to make good use of the advice sent by her, especially of that which you tell me was confirmed in her last retreat."

Six months later he writes again:

"LONDON, May 3rd, 1677.—I rejoice with Sister Alacoque at the sacrifice she has been able to offer to Our Lord, and at the graces she has received in return. I think I completely

understand her last note with the exception of the last words: 'Without reserve.' These words imply so much that I fear I may not be able to put them fully into practice. Not that I do not, even now, draw great fruit from them. But how happy I should be if I could do all the words imply."

Later on, in May, 1678, Father de la Colombière alludes again to the help he has received from her: "May God be eternally praised for deigning to enlighten us, poor blind creatures, by lights given to one who is in intimate communication with Him."

Our Lord, Who revealed to St. Margaret Mary the spiritual needs of her director, and Who Himself told her in what words to convey the advice, watched over His message to see that it was sent exactly as it had been given. On one occasion St. Margaret Mary had gone to her Superior with a written note of a message to be sent to Father de la Colombière. Mère de Saumaise gives the following account of the incident:

"On one occasion Our Lord made known to Sister Margaret Mary the crosses and interior trials that Father de la Colombière was suffering in the country to which his Superiors had sent him. She came to tell me about this, giving me a note for him. It contained two very consoling passages that had been dictated to her by Jesus Christ about the state in which Father de la Colombière then was. A very short time afterwards I received a letter from the holy Jesuit, and I knew by the way he begged for prayers that he had need of the advice given in the note. This decided me to send it. As I was copying it, without saying anything to anyone about it, Sister Alacoque came to me and told me that in copying it I had changed something in it, and that Our Lord wished it to be sent as it had been given. I read it over to see if I really had made a mistake, and I found that I had changed a few words for others like them, but which were less forcible. When Father de la Colombière received my letter he wrote saying that it was exactly suitable to his needs, and that without the help of that advice he did not know what he would have done."

"*May 3rd, 1678.*—Without Sister Alacoque's letter I do not think I could have borne the trials I have been through,

as I am never attacked more violently than when I am weighed down by and almost overwhelmed with work."

Six days later he wrote again: "One cannot help attributing the success to Him, Who alone can draw good from our sufferings according to the advice once sent me by Sister Alacoque."

At the end of July, 1677, St. Margaret Mary must have sent him another note, for he writes:

"Sister Alacoque's letter has been a real strength to me and reassured me as to the thousand misgivings which I have every day. I am much troubled about what she wants of me, but I must answer her. God does not reveal Himself to me as He does to her, and I find it difficult to advise her in anything. However, to content her humility, I will write to her to-day."

At the beginning of February, 1678, Father de la Colombière received another letter, evidently telling him of the writer's intimate communications with Our Lord. On this occasion he wrote again to Mère de Saumaise:

"I would willingly reply to Sister Alacoque's letter, which has edified me extremely, but I feel incapable of saying anything to her, and I am so afraid of interrupting her interior occupation with Our Lord that I cannot make up my mind to follow my inclination. I consider her so wise and so enlightened, and, besides, I am so convinced that God communicates Himself to her in a very special way, that it would be presumption in me to give her any advice.

"She tells me of a second sacrifice God is asking of her—namely, the care of her health. For my part, I consider this a more perfect sacrifice than that concerning prayer, because it is so humiliating and so fitting to detach us from all trust we may have in ourselves. If there were any need to exhort her to obey God's voice in this, I should certainly do it most heartily. I do not see that anything need trouble her, as she loves obscurity and humiliations."

"LONDON, *April 30th*, 1678.—I am most grateful for the letter you sent me from Sister Alacoque. I will answer it and, if you think fit, give it to her; if not, do as you judge best. I am very much consoled by what she writes, and my faith in all Our

Lord communicates to her, either in the past or future, is so strengthened that I have no more merit in believing it."

"LONDON, *June 27th*, 1678.—Sister Alacoque's letter has filled me with confusion, but I cannot tell you how opportunely it arrived. If she had seen into the depths of my soul she could not have written more to the point."

It is indeed to be regretted that St. Margaret Mary's notes, with the exception of two, are not available. In them we should have found the actual words of Our Lord's encouragement to His servant. What these messages were we can only guess, but the humble gratitude with which they were received by Father de la Colombière and the help he derived from them give us a true idea of the measure by which he valued them.

CHAPTER XXII

The King and the Jesuit

"I often experienced great inward joy at the thought that I was in God's service. I felt that this was worth more than all the favours of kings."

—FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE'S first biographer, writing in 1684, declares that "he had the honour of three or four interviews with the King of England." This leaves no room for doubt on the matter, for unless it had been true, no one could have dared to affirm it in 1684, for Charles II. was still alive, and the terrible religious storm of 1678-1681 had hardly yet abated. Charles, as we have seen, though not professing the True Faith, and though living a life which gave much public scandal, seems to have been drawn towards Catholicism. Shortly after his accession, we have seen him deploring with tears that he was obliged to profess a religion of which he did not approve. He negotiated secretly both with the Pope, Alexander VII., and with Louis XIV., to see if by any means the restoration of England to the Faith could be effected. There still exist in the archives of the Society of Jesus five letters written by Charles himself and sealed with the royal seal. One of them, addressed to the General of the Society and dated August 3rd, 1668, runs as follows: "Your Paternity knows that for a long time amid the occupations of our Throne we pray God to give us the occasion of finding in our Kingdom a single man to whom we can turn for the affairs of our salvation. Although we have a number of priests both at the St. James Palace and at Somerset House in the service of the Queen and many also in our city of London, we can make use of none of them, on account of the suspicion we should arouse in the Court if we conversed with them. It is in vain they disguise themselves—they are recognized immediately for what they are."

If Charles wrote thus in 1668, when nothing threatened his authority, we can imagine that some very grave reason must

have caused him to consent to having "three or four interviews" with the French Jesuit at a time when Parliament, irritated by the Catholic tendencies of the King, and still more so by the open profession of faith of the Duke of York, was open to every sort of suspicion and ready for any manifestation of violence against the Catholics. And Father de la Colombière was well known; he had never disguised himself beyond wearing the ordinary dress of a layman, and everyone at the Court was perfectly familiar with the French chaplain, whose very air of sanctity would have made disguise useless.

From the risk Charles ran in interviewing Father de la Colombière at all, it is easy to infer that the King and the Jesuit had an important affair on which to treat. What was this serious question? There is little doubt but that the matter upon which they spoke was the public conversion of Charles, the conditions under which it could take place, and the means to be employed for its accomplishment.

Father de la Colombière, as successor to Père de Saint-Germain, had to occupy himself with what was mysteriously called in the correspondence between Coleman* and Père de Saint-Germain "the affairs of the Catholics." We shall see that one of the accusations brought against Father de la Colombière by Fiquet was of having had an interview with Coleman "every day between eleven o'clock and midday." Coleman was secretary to the Duchess of York, and did not attempt to deny these daily interviews—a thing he would certainly have done had the accusation been a false one. On his side, Father de la Colombière would certainly not have wasted an hour a day on mere visits of politeness. Besides the necessary communications between the Duchess of York and her chaplain, which were probably made through the secretary, there must have been some serious reason for these frequent interviews. This reason could have been nothing else but an exchange of communications between the Kings of England

* The Venerable Edward Coleman, martyr. He was secretary to the Duchess of York, and laid down his life for having tried to "establish liberty of conscience in England." He was hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn on December 3rd, 1678. He was the first victim of the infamous Titus Oates Plot.

and France with the object of establishing in England a legal state of liberty of conscience. Charles II. would then have been at liberty to proclaim himself a Catholic. The Venerable Edward Coleman, when condemned to death for wanting to overthrow the Protestant religion, declared that he had no such thought, and that he had worked only to obtain from the Parliament liberty of conscience.

It is probable that in the interviews between Charles and Father de la Colombière the personal conversion of the King was as much aimed at as anything else. Under the circumstances, these conversations had to take place as secretly as possible, and with the greatest possible prudence on the part of the Jesuit. There are several passages in his letters which seem to point to the great hopes he entertained of the complete conversion of the King. Just when he is at the height of his success as a preacher he says: "But I have brighter hopes still for next year." These words were written after the complete conversion of the Duchess (possibly the King's cousin) of whom we have spoken in another chapter. After this success the "brighter hopes" would seem to refer to the conversion of the King himself. In another letter he writes: "I am not at liberty to tell you everything." Again, he speaks of a projected journey to Scotland—a journey which after all never took place. Now Father de la Colombière was so exceedingly busy with the Catholics in London that he complained of not finding an entire hour for prayer. He would never surely have even contemplated a journey to Scotland if he did not consider the fruit to be gained greater even than that he was gathering in London. This journey was probably connected with an embassy Charles was anxious to send to Rome, in absolute secrecy, about the questions of religion.

It is certain that Father de la Colombière had some influence for good over the King. Several Protestant historians affirm that Charles II. often went to the Catholic chapels of the Queen and the Duchess of York to assist at the services. Hume, in his "History of the House of Stuart," writes: "Mr. William Chaffinch, page of the Chambers, consented, immediately after the death of Charles II., to show to certain special

friends a tiny secret chapel adjoining the private apartment of the King. It was there, he declared, that the King in his last years used to repair secretly in order to hear Mass."

When in 1685 Charles II. lay dying, he received the Last Sacraments of the Church from the hands of Father Huddleston, a Benedictine priest who had saved the King's life after the Battle of Worcester in 1651, and who had been allowed to remain at the Court without molestation in recognition of his services. Charles certainly died a true penitent, and who knows how much he owed to the intercession of the holy French Jesuit to whom he had granted the honour of "three or four interviews"?

When Charles II. died two papers were found in a secret drawer of his cabinet. They are religious documents, written in French and copied by the King's own hand. James II. made them public, attesting their authenticity with his own royal hand, and presenting them as proof that the Catholic Faith was the faith of his brother.

These documents contain simple but peremptory reasons to prove to the King that the Catholic Church is the only true Church of Jesus Christ. In reading them and comparing them with the writings of Venerable Claude de la Colombière, one is struck by the similarity of the two. There is the same easy, dignified style, the same clearness of reasoning, even the same authorities quoted. The care with which the King preserved these papers showed how he valued them. They seem to give us the keynote of the interviews between Charles and the chaplain of the Duchess of York. Heaven watched over this King, the descendant of St. Louis (Henrietta Maria was sister to Louis XIII.), and sent the apostle of the Sacred Heart to enlighten him as to his errors and to lead him finally to repentance.

Father de le Colombière was the last French Jesuit who had access to Charles II.

CHAPTER XXIII

Arrest—Imprisonment—Banishment, 1678–1679

“Load me, Lord, with sufferings and trials, that I may have some part in Thine.”—FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE.

FOR two years Father de la Colombière had spent his health and strength in the service of his Master at St. James's Court, and now he was to realize the truth in his own case of Our Lord's words to St. Paul: “I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name” (Acts ix. 16). For two years he consoled and strengthened the faithful, welcomed and converted heretics and apostates, encouraged the good in virtue and led the generous to the heights of perfection. He had guided the future Queen of England, and had done what he could to enlighten the conscience of the reigning monarch.

Both Charles II. and the Duke of York were favourably disposed to the Jesuits at this time. Of this the Fathers of the Society had a manifest proof in the spring of 1678. According to their Constitutions, the Jesuits have to meet in a general Provincial Council every three years, to discuss the affairs of the Society and send the report to the General at Rome. The triennial meeting for the English Province was due in April, 1678. About forty members of the Society had to be assembled, twenty-three of whom were between the ages of sixty and eighty-three. Under the political and religious circumstances of the time, this was no easy matter, and there was a good deal of discussion as to where the meeting could be most conveniently held. They were about to fix upon the White Horse Tavern in the Strand, when the Duke of York, with the consent of the King, offered them a room in his own Palace of St. James. The meeting was held there on April 24th, 25th, and 26th. It must have been a joy to the Jesuits to find themselves able to meet under the very roof of the heir to the throne. They may perhaps have been led

to hope that the persecution they had so long endured was about to end, but it was not to be so. Six months later the storm was to burst forth with renewed fury, and ten of those who attended that meeting in the Palace were to lay down their lives for the Faith.

In the summer of 1678 one of the greatest of impostors arrived in England from the Continent. This infamous man was Titus Oates. He had been first an anabaptist minister, then an orthodox clergyman; but he successively forfeited his preferments in consequence of his misconduct. He then feigned to be a convert to the Catholic Faith, and went to the English Jesuit College at Valladolid. From here he was expelled in the utmost disgrace. Under pretence of repentance he was admitted to the Jesuit College at St. Omer, but he was not received by the Society even as a novice, and he very soon showed himself in his true colours, and was expelled again. Upon this he returned to London, vowing vengeance on the Catholics, and in particular upon the Jesuits. He heard of the meeting the Jesuits had held in April, but was ignorant of where it had taken place. On this extraordinarily slight foundation Oates and his colleague, a certain Dr. Tonge, wove a huge fabrication of lies, which has come down in history under the name of the "Titus Oates" or "Popish" Plot.

Oates declared that the consultation of the Jesuits was held to discuss the best means of assassinating the King and of subverting the Protestant religion by force. Charles was to be either poisoned by his physician, Sir George Wakeman, or shot by a Jesuit lay-brother, Groves, and a Benedictine lay-brother, Pickering. Though the King was convinced that the whole statement was a lie, still he allowed Oates to be examined on September 28th, 1678, before the Privy Council. The statement Oates gave was more like the dream of a madman than that of a man in his senses. He repeated the heads of accusation next day before the King:

1. "That the Jesuits and Benedictines, by order of the Pope, conspired against the life of the King of England, and of the Protestants, and had drawn in as accomplices of their crimes the Kings of France and Spain.

2. "That Oates, being sent to Madrid by the Jesuits, treated for some hours with John of Austria about the overthrow of the kingdom of England. On the same occasion, as he averred, he obtained from the Provincial of the Castilian Province 400,000 golden crowns to start the conspiracy.

3. "That Oates, proceeding to Paris on a similar errand, obtained from the confessor (Père de la Chaise) of his Christian Majesty the same amount of crowns in gold.

4. "That the Father-General of the Society (Père Oliva, S.J.) had sent to England 80,000 crowns in gold for the purpose of levying soldiers, and likewise a diploma in his own handwriting, confirmed by his seal of office, whereby he assigned the first posts of honour in the kingdom both civil and military to Catholics: the office of Lord Chancellor to Lord Arundell of Wardour, that of First Lord of the Treasury to Lord Powis; Lord Bellasis was to be Commander-in-Chief of the Forces, Lord Petre Lieutenant-General, etc.

[Oates said he had seen and had himself delivered this diploma into the hands of the commissioners.]

5. "That the commander and officers of the whole army and of the various divisions had been appointed by letters patent, issued by the Provincial. Ecclesiastical dignities, in like manner, and by the same authority, were conferred on the Fathers of the Society, and other priests." (See "Annual Letters of the English Province," Foley's Records, vol. v., pp. 15, 16.)

These preposterous lies were listened to in astonished silence by the Council. An objection was raised as to the authenticity of the letters produced, as neither the handwriting nor the spelling could have been those of any educated man. Oates declared that it was the custom of the Jesuits to disguise their handwriting and to interlard their letters with errors in orthography! At this the King lost patience and began to question the impostor. "What kind of a man is this John of Austria?" Oates described a man of stature and appearance entirely different from the truth, upon which Charles said: "It is quite clear that you have never seen him. Whereabouts in Paris did you treat with the Jesuits?" "In their own house,

your Majesty." "And where is that?" "That, your Majesty, is near the King's own house." At this Charles's anger blazed out: "Man," he cried, "the Jesuits have three houses in Paris, but not one within a mile of the Louvre." And rising to go, he added: "This fellow is a most lying scoundrel."

Such a tissue of lies might perhaps have been treated with the contempt it deserved, had not two events roused the country to a pitch of frenzy and intolerance. A few weeks later Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, the magistrate before whom Oates and Tonge had made their depositions, was found dead in a ditch on Primrose Hill, transfixd by his own sword. The general opinion of historians is that the unfortunate man died by his own hand. He had inherited a melancholy disposition from his father, who had committed suicide, and for some time he had been observed to be suffering from great depression. Circumstances then pointed to suicide, but prejudice declared it was murder; and the crime was attributed to the Catholics.

A perfect frenzy of fear took possession of the nation; the hatred towards the Catholic religion seemed to be redoubled, and many innocent lives were at once sacrificed.

The second event which fanned the flame of hatred was connected with Edward Coleman, the secretary to the Duchess of Norfolk, and friend of the Venerable Father de la Colombière. The downfall of the secretary meant the downfall of the priest, and proved to be such.

Coleman was a devout Catholic, but not nearly as prudent and discreet as his position required. The Duke of York had used his wife's secretary as a sort of go-between in his correspondence with France, especially between 1675-1676. This correspondence, to which we alluded in the previous chapter, was seized, at the arrest of Coleman at the time of the Oates Plot. His indictment ran principally under the two following heads: first, for holding a correspondence with foreign Powers, especially with the French Court, for the purpose of subverting the Protestant religion; and secondly, for carrying on sundry consultations, and consenting to a resolution to assassinate the

King. Coleman was wholly innocent under this latter head; it was merely the fabrication of a couple of villains. But the former heading was a serious charge. Coleman's letters were produced in court. One of them was to Père la Chaise, dated June 29th, 1674, in which he referred to a sum of money the French King had offered the Duke of York to elect a new Parliament more pliable and favourable to the relief of Catholics. There was nothing actually treasonable in the letters, but quite sufficient foundation for Oates to weave another tissue of lies. Coleman was committed to Newgate on October 13th, and whilst the secretary of the Duchess awaited his execution, which took place on December 3rd, 1678, the chaplain of Her Royal Highness was likewise arrested and imprisoned.

One would have thought that Father de la Colombière, from the non-political office he held as chaplain and preacher to the Duchess of York, and from the fact that he was a Frenchman, would have been in no danger from the storm. Oates had left London before Father de la Colombière's arrival in England, and had only returned on July 3rd, 1678, at which time the saintly Jesuit was seriously ill, unable to preach in public, and therefore unknown to the impostor. The name of the chaplain did not appear on any of the lists of the pretended authors of the Plot. No, the apostle of the Sacred Heart was not denounced as the others were: he was to be honoured by being allowed to share more closely in the Passion of his Master. Father de la Colombière was betrayed by one to whom he had shown the utmost kindness. The price promised to one who denounced a priest was £20, but for denouncing a Jesuit £100. This bribe proved too tempting a bait for the traitor, and he denounced Father de la Colombière, who later on wrote the following account of his betrayal to one of his Jesuit friends:

"I was accused in London by a youth from Dauphiné, whom I believed I had converted, and whom I had maintained for nearly three months after his change of faith. Having some cause to complain of his conduct towards me, together with the impossibility of continuing to support him, I was compelled to dismiss him; he threatened to revenge himself by betraying

our intercourse. Besides other calumnies, he imputed to me certain designs against the King and the Parliament. As he knew something of my doings, he was not slow to exaggerate into glaring crimes the little good I was able to effect among Protestants; he even made me appear far more zealous and successful in my labours than I really was."

This traitor was named "du Fiquet."* The Protestant author of "English Conspiracies" gives the denunciation in detail.

"Father de la Colombière, Jesuit, and chaplain to the Duchess of York, was accused of taking part in the conspiracy. He was held in great consideration and esteem by those of his own religion, passing for a devout, wise, and zealous man. It happened like this:

"On Monday, November 21st, the day on which the King attended Parliament, all sorts of people from the provinces and from abroad went to the Low Hall at Westminster in order to see the prisoners pass and to hear the news. . . . Du Fiquet was conversing with a Frenchman called Petit. He happened to say: 'The Jesuit from our own country has committed himself in conversation as well as the Englishman. He never thought all this would happen. If he had enemies they could make a fine tale out of it.' Petit seized on these words and pressed du Fiquet to tell him what he knew. After hearing all, Petit told him that he was absolutely bound to denounce La Colombière. If he refused to do it, he—Petit—would do it himself."

In order to have means of approaching the Lords of the Commission, du Fiquet made up his mind to go and find a young French minister, Luzancy, so as to consult him as to the measures he ought to take.

Luzancy, it will be remembered, had been instrumental in driving Père de Saint-Germain from the English Court. He was now to wreak his malice on Father de la Colombière.

Luzancy's life had been a very discreditable one. He was the son of a French actress, Madame de Chastelet, *née* Beau-

* The name is found variously spelt in different English documents: Fiquet, du Fiquet, Vicquier, Fugat, Defuquat, Dufiquat, etc.

chatteau, but having robbed the Demoiselle Cartier of a considerable sum of money, by signing a cheque with the forged name of Luzancy, he fled to England to escape justice, assumed for a time the name of De la Marche, and then resumed that of Luzancy. He openly apostatized in London and preached a violent sermon against the Catholic Faith on July 11th, 1675. This infamous man was taken notice of by some of the Protestants, and the Bishop of London took care to have him ordained, with a design of putting him in a condition of becoming one day a great defender of the Church of England. Luzancy then plotted to overthrow Père de Saint-Germain. He pretended that he repented of his apostasy, and entreated Père de Saint-Germain to assist him in making his abjuration and returning to France. The Father believed in his sincerity, but Luzancy was a traitor as well as an apostate. He at once reported Père de Saint-Germain to the Privy Council and the Parliament, as guilty of high treason for having attempted, contrary to the laws of the realm, to bring him back from the Protestant religion to the Catholic Church, and moreover charged him with having, together with two armed men, threatened him with death if he would not sign the recantation. This unlikely tale was not believed either by the King or his Councillors, but it was deemed more prudent to withdraw Père de Saint-Germain from the English Court. Luzancy returned to France, but his impostures and villainies were publicly made known by a clever and forcible pamphlet written by a French Protestant minister. He lay hidden for some time, but he returned to England in 1678 at the time of the Oates Plot, determined to seek his revenge on the Jesuits. It was to this man that du Fiquet turned for advice as to how Father de la Colombière had best be entrapped. They agreed to accuse the unoffending Jesuit under the following heads:

1. Of having said in familiar conversation that the King was a Catholic at heart.
2. Of declaring that the Parliament would not always be master, nor have the same power.
3. Of being intimate with Coleman.

4. Of having suborned a man called Salomon to re-enter his monastery.

5. Of ministering to a Convent of nuns, who were hidden in London.*

6. That he had sent missionaries to Virginia and Newfoundland.

Luzancy conducted the informer, armed with this document, to the Bishop of London, his great protector. From thence they proceeded to the Lord Chancellor.

The letter of denunciation is preserved in the library of the Marquis of Bath at Longleat. Upon it and with the added testimony of one Verdier, the report of the examination of Father de la Colombière was drawn up. We give both du Fiquet's denunciation and the report, for it is interesting to see how these two played into each other's hands, both being determined on the downfall of the brave confessor of Christ.

Du Fiquet writes:

"I feel myself obliged in conscience and by my fidelity to the King and to religion to say what follows:

"1. That M. La Colombière, Jesuit and preacher to the Duchess of York, who lives in St. James, has for three months (to my knowledge) been in communication with M. Coleman, who came to see La Colombière in his own room every day from eleven o'clock till midday, when they conversed together; and that after these three months La Colombière sent his valet to the country for two months and a half, and took in his place the nephew of M. Coleman, who is between thirteen and fourteen years old; and when M. Coleman was taken prisoner, La Colombière sent away the nephew of M. Coleman and took back his valet.

"2. That La Colombière told me, in his room, that the Parliament would not always be master.

"3. That he said that if the Parliament was against the Catholics the King would dissolve it.

"4. That La Colombière wished me to change my religion; but seeing I made a difficulty about it because I feared to do

* Nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

wrong and that it would not be permitted in London, he told me that I might do it, that he would answer for it, and that the King would not prevent me from being a Roman Catholic, because he was one himself in his heart, and that he knew that very well. Besides, as I told him that I had thought of going to Oxford to study so as to enter the ministry by means of my friends, and that I had come to London for this very purpose, he told me that I ought not to do it because the theology at Oxford was full of errors, and that I should fill my mind with the errors taught there.

“5. A few days later he told me that he had spoken to the Duke of York about having persuaded me from becoming a minister, that the Duke had appeared satisfied and had even said that he would do me great service if I would become a Roman Catholic.

“6. La Colombière said again that I could very well be a Roman Catholic, seeing that His Royal Highness is one, and that he hears Mass and receives the Sacraments of the Roman Church, that which was confirmed to me by Le Lièvre, valet of Monsieur La Colombière, and by one called Antoine, sacristan of the Chapel, who told me that His Royal Highness hears Mass through a secret window.

“7. That, seeing that I made difficulties, La Colombière even wished to send me to Paris to the Cardinal de Bouillon, so that I could be under his protection. I even saw the letter, and another letter from a Jesuit in Paris to whom La Colombière had written in order to recommend me to Père La Chaise, Jesuit and confessor to the King of France.

“8. La Colombière has received in his room the abjurations of as many Frenchmen as Englishmen, that he has even sent into France a number of young Englishmen to induce them to change their religion; and I have spoken, even, with a young man in La Colombière's room, who told me that La Colombière was sending him to France, to the College of Clermont, under the protection of Cardinal de Bouillon.

“9. Monsieur Drevil, of the French nation, who lives with the French Ambassador, brought to La Colombière's room and by his command an English Merchant in order to

pervert him, and whom La Colombière was to send to France with his family.

“10. La Colombière has sent into France ecclesiastical persons and ministers of London, among others M. Salomon, whom he recommended to Cardinal de Bouillon, asking him to help him to get to Rome with another person who had left his monastery in order to adopt the Protestant religion; later on La Colombière sent him into Picardy, near Abbeville, to the house of the brother of Le Lièvre, his valet, where he was to look after a large sum of money.

“11. That La Colombière was on the look-out for priests, so as to send them to Virginia, to say Mass and preach and teach catechism, and that he had even stopped an Irish priest whom he had sent to a merchant living near the Savoy to see that he embarked.

“12. La Colombière told me there were several women in a house near St. Paul's who lived a monastic life. This was confirmed to me by Le Lièvre, his valet.

“This is all that I can affirm on oath in presence of the parties. I add that La Colombière has caused Mass to be said in the house of Mr. Roberts, and has ordered the Irish priest who was to have gone to Virginia, to say Mass every Sunday and Feast-day in Mr. Robert's house. This priest has perverted, in France, a young Irishman, a minister's son who at present is living with Mr. Glisson in the Strand.

“OLIVIER DUFIQUET.

“I forgot to say that La Colombière has taken the Sacrament to several places, in particular to Madame Chasseville, who lives in Piccadilly.

“La Colombière told me a few days ago that in a short time I should see England completely changed.

“OLIVIER DUFIQUET.”

No one will accuse Antoine Arnauld, the Jansenist, of being favourably inclined towards the Jesuits. Yet in 1682, the very year of Father de la Colombière's death, he wrote: “We should be mistaken did we speak of what has lately taken place in

England as a comedy. It is a barbarous tragedy—the author the devil himself.” He then enumerates the charges brought against Father de la Colombière, and continues: “I ask every sensible man whether there is anything in these six articles which can be construed into the shadow of a conspiracy against the King and the State. But the exclamation of the Prophet Isaias, when speaking of the Jewish people, is true at this day of the English: *Omnia quæ loquitur populus iste conjuratio est*—‘To these men all is a conspiracy.’

“A Jesuit, living under the royal authority, chaplain to the King’s sister-in-law, advises an apostate monk to return to his monastery—a conspiracy. He is the director of some ladies who wish to live a religious life in London—again a conspiracy. He is anxious that some priests should go and preach the Gospel in some parts of America, colonized by the English—another conspiracy. Could anything be more absurd? Moreover, it was a signal outrage to the first Princess in England after the Queen to arrest her confessor in the Palace itself, and afterwards to imprison him for what was in one sense a mere trifle, and in another, considering his religion and his profession, conduct worthy of all praise, and this whilst living under the protection of the King. And after that, they think we are foolish enough to believe that it is not for their religion that the English Catholics are persecuted—but simply for conspiracies! Could there be anything more unreasonable than to recognize a Frenchman, in his quality of Catholic priest, to be willing that he should exercise his functions, and then to punish him with prison, or perhaps worse, for things which they must have expected him to do on the first occasion which occurred, unless they suppose him to be altogether wanting in zeal for his religion.”

This is the language of common sense. But in 1678 England had gone mad with regard to the religious question.

The Bishop of London sent the letter of denunciation before the Committee charged by the Parliament to search for all so-called conspirators.

On the night of November 24th Father de la Colombière had been arrested—guilty only of zeal for the cause of Jesus

Christ. "I was seized in my bedroom, two hours after midnight," he wrote. For two days he was confined in the Palace. On the 26th at midday they took him to the Prison of the King's Bench, Southwark. On the 28th he was brought out of prison for examination and confronted with his accuser, before a dozen or so of the Commissioners of the House of Lords. Before entering the Hall they made him wait some time in an adjoining room, and there in full view of a crowd of spectators he quietly opened his Breviary and said his office. He stood before his judges with a calm modesty which spoke well for his innocence. He replied to all the questions put to him, and the Lords of the Council showed clearly enough that they did not consider him guilty. Some of the Commissioners treated him civilly and only alleged against him the conversions he had tried to effect, for, after all, they would have lost too much in declaring him innocent.

They could not, however, condemn him unless a witness confirmed on oath the heads of accusations. François Verdier, a Frenchman, was found willing to do this on November 29th in presence of Lord Anglesey:

"Francis Verdier saith that about five or six months since, he was at M. Colombière's chambers with M. Fiquet, and there heard the said Colombière speak to M. Fiquet, persuading him to become a Catholic, using arguments for it. Whereupon the aforesaid Fiquet said: 'Though all were true that he urged, yet it was not fit for him in this Country, while the King would not permit it.' To which the said Colombière replied 'that the King would not take it ill, if he, the said Fiquet, should turn Catholic, for that the King himself was a Catholic in his heart.'

"FRANÇOIS VERDIER.

"Sworn upon the 29th day of November, 1678.

"ANGLESEY."

After having been subjected to the interrogation, Father de la Colombière was taken back to prison, where he was closely confined for three weeks.

The Commissioners showed that they were entirely convinced of the innocence of the French chaplain with regard to the Titus Oates Plot, but they used their knowledge of his relations with Coleman as a plea for clamouring for his banishment.

On Thursday, December 1st, Lord Winchester read his report to the House of Lords. It is interesting to note the deviation between this report and Fiquet's letter of denunciation:

"1. La Colombière, Jesuit and preacher to the Duchess, hath for the space of three months had frequent communication with M. Coleman, who came every day to communicate with him in his chamber from eleven in the morning until midday. Further, that M. La Colombière sent his servant Lièvre to stay in the country for the space of two months and a half, and took to his service the nephew of M. Coleman, betwixt thirteen and fourteen years old. And after that M. Coleman was put in prison, M. La Colombière took his servant again and sent away the nephew of M. Coleman, and went to live in the country. Further, I know that M. La Colombière hath great correspondence with Father La Chaise and with Cardinal Bouillon.

"2. Monsieur La Colombière told me, to induce me to his religion, that if I made so much difficulty the King would not hinder me to make choice of the Roman Catholic religion, seeing he knew very well that the King was a Catholic in his heart.

"3. Furthermore, when I represented to him, 'That the Parliament would not suffer perversion in England,' M. La Colombière said to me, 'That if the Parliament opposed Roman Catholics the King would dissolve it.' And further, 'That the Parliament should not always be master.' He told me also, 'That I should see in a little time all England changed,' which also was confirmed to me many times by his servant.

"4. And, as I had a design to go to study at Oxford, he turned me from it, representing to me, 'That if I went to study at Oxford I should fill my mind with the errors which the divinity at Oxford teacheth, contrary to Holy Scripture, and if I would return into France he would, by means of Father La Chaise, Jesuit and Confessor of the King of France, place me to study

in the College of Clermont; and also that he did write to Paris, to a Jesuit, in the absence of Father La Chaise, whose answer I read myself in M. La Colombière's chamber; and also that I had told the Duke of York, that he had turned me from my purpose of being a minister, and said that His Highness expressed much satisfaction in it, which surprised me much. But then M. La Colombière told me, 'That I ought not to wonder at that, seeing that His Highness was a Catholic and received often the sacraments.' This also was confirmed to me by his servant.

"5. Moreover, Monsieur La Colombière hath received many abjurations in his chamber, as well of French as of English, and also I spoke in his chamber to an English gentleman, whom he sent into France to pervert, by means of Cardinal Bouillon.

"6. That Monsieur Drevil, a Frenchman, carried to M. La Colombière an English merchant to pervert him, whom La Colombière was to send into France, with his family, to the Cardinal Bouillon.

"7. That M. La Colombière sends secretly priests to Virginia, amongst others Maccarty, an Irish priest, who was carried by La Colombière's servant, and by his order to M. Le Choquenna, who lives at the Savoy; and also La Colombière told me, 'That he desired to go thither.' This is all I can affirm upon oath.

"8. Furthermore, that La Colombière hath caused Mass to be said at Mr. Angus' by Maccarty every Sunday and holiday, and also in the country.

"9. That La Colombière hath seduced M. Salomon, a minister at the Savoy, to put him into a convent, and another person that was come with an intention to enter into the ministry, La Colombière hath sent them into France and gave them money in Picardy in his servant Lièvre's house, and then they were to pass to Rome by means of Cardinal Bouillon.

"This is all I can affirm upon oath and in presence of the parties.

"OLIVIER DU FIQUET.

"Capt. et jurat. Novemb. 26, 1678,

"Coram me,

"WINCHESTER."

Consequent on the reading of this report in the House of Lords was the issue of the following order:

“ADDRESS FOR THE BANISHMENT OF LA COLOMBIÈRE. Upon report made from the Lords’ Committees appointed to examine persons for the discovery of the horrid design against His Majesty’s person or government. That upon the examination of Olivier du Fiquet and François Verdier, taken upon oath, it appeareth that La Colombière (a Jesuit and preacher to the Duchess), now prisoner in the King’s Bench, hath held frequent and long communications with Mr. Coleman, and hath great correspondence with Father La Chaise and with Cardinal Bouillon, and that he hath endeavoured to pervert the said Olivier du Fiquet and François Verdier, and others, to the Popish religion, using arguments of a dangerous nature for that purpose, and hath in his chamber received many abjurations of persons as well French as English, and that he hath secretly sent priests into Virginia, of whom Maccarty, an Irish priest, was one. All which matters being of dangerous consequence, and in opposition to the peace and government of this kingdom, it is therefore ordered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in Parliament assembled, that the Lords with White Staves do attend His Majesty, humbly to desire him from this House, that His Majesty will be pleased to give order that the said La Colombière may be banished out of this kingdom and all other His Majesty’s territories and Dominions wheresoever.”

This order was presented to the King on December 3rd. But Charles postponed his answer. He knew perfectly well that Father de la Colombière was innocent. Perhaps he hoped that if he took no step the affair would be forgotten, and that in a short time the Jesuit might be set at liberty.

In any case, Father de la Colombière languished in prison, gladly suffering for the love of Christ.

To-day the Prison of the King’s Bench does not exist, so it is impossible to see the walls which held captive the chaplain of the Duchess of York. Anyone who has read descriptions of the

English prisons of that date will be able to form an idea of the sufferings of the holy confessors, men, women, and children, who were incarcerated in their horrible dungeons. The food, for which for the most part the prisoners had to pay themselves, was poor and scanty, the gaolers sometimes only providing half the quantity paid for. The straw which formed the only bed was changed but once a month, so that the prisons were swarming with vermin. The air was fetid beyond description, and many who entered the prison in full health, in a very short time became emaciated, weak and ill, and fell dead on the floor of their dungeons, killed by pestilence, such as typhus or smallpox. The cruel words of a creditor to his debtor, "Go and rot in prison," had their literal application. Howard, writing on the "State of the Prisons in England and Wales," says that they were an "anticipation of hell."

It was this "hell" that the apostle of the Sacred Heart had to endure in the King's Bench Prison.

Barillon, the French Ambassador at London, informed Louis XIV. of the arrest of Father de la Colombière: "The Duchess of York's Jesuit Chaplain, Father de la Colombière, has been taken into custody charged with attempting to convert a Protestant and with having told him that the English King was really a Catholic."

If sentence of death had been passed Louis would certainly have intervened. But the English did not wish to irritate Louis by executing one of his innocent subjects. Père Gallifet, in writing on the subject, says: "He was arrested and put in prison from hatred to the Catholic religion, and had it not been out of consideration for the Duchess whom he served, he would have shared the fate of five of his brethren who were condemned to death—a happy fate, his escape from which Father de la Colombière regretted all his life."

It must not surprise us that the Duchess of York, who had been so faithfully served by her chaplain, was able to do little or nothing for him. She did indeed try to give him a proof of her esteem or gratitude by sending her Italian chaplain, Father Antoine Henry, to visit Father de la Colombière in prison, and to find out if he had need of anything. The

prisoner asked for paper, pen and ink, and Father Henry petitioned that he might be allowed to have them. He met not only with a refusal, but such was the agitation of the people's minds at the time, that the innocent request was looked upon as a crime, and Father Henry was summoned before the Commissioners on November 30th. He was accused of having asked the prisoner where his accusers lived. On two consecutive days Father Henry denied the charge. Le Lièvre was arrested and interrogated, but set free. Evidently the crime existed only in the imaginations of the Commissioners.

Father de la Colombière's state of health, as we have seen, had more than once brought him to death's door. Who can tell what he did not suffer during the three weeks of his imprisonment? But God did not leave His servant without consolation. "It would take me a long time," he wrote later, "to give you all the details of the affair, especially if I were to tell you of the mercies God bestowed on me at every turn, almost at every moment. I can only say that I have never been so happy as I was amidst the storm."

But in spite of his spiritual joy, his frail health could not withstand such hardships. Hæmorrhage set in again, and Father de la Colombière was reduced almost to extremity. Still his time of reward had not yet come. On December 16th the Parliament again urged the King to sign the Act of Banishment. Charles did so that very day, adding a document which accorded the prisoner ten days' grace, as the doctors agreed that an immediate journey would kill him.

The two documents inscribed on the register of the Privy Council and preserved in the archives at Whitehall, ran as follows:

"At the Court of Whitehall this 16th of December, 1678.

"MONSIEUR COLOMBIÈRE
*to be delivered into a Mes-
senger's hand in order to his
transportation.*

It being this day represented to His Majesty in Council, that His Majesty had been lately presented with an address from the House of Lords for the Banishment of

Monsieur Colombière, a French Jesuit, upon some complaints which had been given Us against him, and for which he was

apprehended, and now stands committed prisoner in His Majesty's prison of the King's Bench, His Majesty hath thereupon thought fit to order, and it is hereby Ordered, accordingly, that the Keeper of the said prison of King's Bench, do discharge out of his custody the said Monsieur Colombière, and him deliver into the hands of John Bradley, one of His Majesty's Messengers in ordinary, who hath Direction to secure and conduct him to the Waterside, and there to see him embarked in order to his transportation beyond the Seas, according to the address aforesaid, and for so doing this shall be to the Keeper of the said prison of King's Bench a sufficient Warrant."

"MONSIEUR COLOMBIÈRE
*to continue in the custody of
John Bradley ten days for
the recovery of his health.*

Whereas order is this day given by His Majesty in Council that the Keeper of the Prison of the King's Bench should deliver into the Custody of John Bradley, one of

His Majesty's Messengers in ordinary, the body of Monsieur Colombière, a French Jesuit, in order to his banishment and transportation beyond the seas, according to an address lately made unto His Majesty by the House of Lords to that effect, and Whereas the execution of His Majesty's answer to the House of Lords hath been hitherto deferred, upon representation made that the Prisoner was in a languishing condition, being consumptive and spitting blood, so as the voyage might have endangered his life, and that he still labours under the same infirmity, so that some days are absolutely necessary to enable him with strength for the said voyage, and that he may probably recover by changing into better air than that of the said Prison, His Majesty hath thought fit to order, and it is hereby accordingly ordered, that the said John Bradley do take the same Monsieur Colombière into his charge and Custody, allowing him Such accommodation for his health as he shall desire, so as his continuance in and about this city do not exceed the space of 10 days after removal from the King's Bench, but that at, or before the expiration of the said ten days he depart with his prisoner to the Water-side, and bring

certificate to the clerk of the Council in writing that his said Prisoner was actually shipped in order to his transportation beyond the Seas."

These papers coincide exactly with Father de la Colombière's own words: "They gave me ten days, during which they let me go where I liked on parole, so that I was able to say Good-bye to many, whom I was delighted to see again before my departure."

The redoubtable conspirator was allowed to walk in the Palace gardens! And the King himself gave orders concerning his health!

Many flocked to the Palace to say good-bye to their friend and spiritual Father, overjoyed to have the privilege of speaking to him once more. But Father de la Colombière himself was sad at the thought of the martyr's crown which was not to be his. In touching humility he wrote: "I was unworthy of such happiness, and I reflect with heartfelt sorrow that Our Lord withdrew me from His vineyard, finding me wanting in the fervour and fidelity which He demands from His labourers. Pray to Him, I beseech you, for those whom I am leaving in such great trouble. They are worthy of your compassion and your zeal. They suffer terribly, and most of them with an admirable constancy."

Sadly did the saintly confessor watch the shores of England disappearing in the mist. He left London probably on December 30th, and a day or two later embarked at Dover, arriving on his native soil on one of the first days of January, 1679. The following lines, written shortly after his arrival in France, let us see how dearly he loved England, where he had so nobly worked, suffered, and prayed: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that at a word, at the slightest intimation from my Superiors, I am willing to return to that shore to work and suffer. Does Thy justice require yet another victim, take my life. Verily, O Lord, shouldst Thou restore this people to the fold of Thy Church, Thou wouldst find amongst them many true and generous hearts there to glorify, as in past days, Thy adorable Name."

CHAPTER XXIV

Towards Evening: 1679-1680

“Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent.”
—ST. LUKE XXIV. 29.

WHEN Father de la Colombière reached France in the early days of January, 1679, the evening of his life had begun to throw its lengthened shadows across his path. His active work was nearly done. True, he had three years still before him in which to serve His Master, but the service was to be passive, not active. He had still to learn that “they also serve who only stand and wait,” and he, like many another before and since, found inactivity and suffering a far harder trial than any work, however incessant and strenuous. Still, he did what little he could, mindful of his Master’s warning, “Work while it is day, for the night cometh in which no man can work” (St. John ix. 4).

The ordinary route in those days from Calais to Paris was by way of Boulogne, Montreuil, Abbeville, and Beauvais. Probably Father de la Colombière made no stop on the way, for he reached Paris before January 15th. On the 16th he wrote the following humble letter to his Provincial, Père Louis de Camaret:

“PARIS, *January 16th, 1679.*—Had I been able before leaving England to forward letters to France, I should have informed your Reverence of the exile to which I have been condemned, and in that case I should, perhaps, have had your orders as to my destination awaiting me on my arrival here. As I think it may not be advisable for me to remain here long, I will leave, my health permitting, on the 29th, if I do not hear from you before that date, and I will go to Lyons, there to await your orders. I am grieved to return to the Province in a state in which, apparently, I shall not be able to do much work this year. My lungs are badly affected, and I am so susceptible to heat and cold that I have had two relapses, one on account

of a slight mental strain, the other caused by a chill. However, the English doctors assured me that the milder climate of France and the spring weather will restore me to my former state of health. God's Will be done in all things! I believe that, preaching excepted, I could even now do any work you may ask of me; even if you wish me to preach, I should not hesitate to try. Perhaps I am wrong in thinking it would hurt me; your Reverence's commands would make me change my opinion, and in a matter of obedience I should hope, by God's grace, to find nothing impossible."

Truly this is the letter of a man who thinks little of himself. There is no reference to his sufferings, no mention of the dangers he has gone through; nothing but a regret that his health makes him likely to be a burden on his Superiors, and a suggestion that Paris is not the most suitable place for him to be in. The reason for this desire to leave Paris is not far to seek. A paper called the *Gazette de France* had kept the French capital informed of all the English news. The arrival of the Duchess of York's chaplain, who had been imprisoned and exiled, could not pass unperceived. Father de la Colombière most certainly paid a visit to Père de la Chaise, to give him an account of the mission which had been entrusted to him, and to tell him of the upheaval in England caused by the Titus Oates plot. Whether he also had to appear before Louis XIV. we do not know, but it is highly probable that he was summoned to do so. Now, there was nothing Father de la Colombière disliked more than publicity, and he feared it as well as disliking it. Therefore it was that he begged not to remain in Paris, and therefore, also, it was that none of his writings contain any account of what passed on his arrival at the capital. Besides Father de la Colombière's letter to the Provincial, only two of those he wrote in Paris have been preserved. One was a business note to Mère de Saumaise, about a widow who wished to enter the Convent at Dijon. In this note he makes no mention at all of what he is doing in Paris, but he expresses a hope that he will soon see her, and promises then to tell her of his last days in England. The second letter is to a fellow-Jesuit who had asked him for some "details of his adventures."

Father de la Colombière writes a short account of a few of them and encloses them with the following letter:

“The marks of friendship you show me in your letter, give me great pleasure. I do not know what foundation you have for your ‘great gratitude.’ You owe me very little. But it is a great happiness for me that you think you have obligations towards me, and that you must repay them by your prayers, for I have great confidence in them. I do not forget you in mine, and although I cannot think I have ever done you the least good, I do not the less thank God for all the blessings He gives you, and for having fulfilled all my hopes in your regard.”

Before the end of January Father de la Colombière had received orders to go to Lyons. The quickest and easiest route was by water, but the weather was too cold to allow of an invalid taking that way, so Father de la Colombière was told to come by land, and received permission to break his journey at Dijon and at Paray.

The Jesuits at the College des Godrons at Dijon were only too glad to welcome the confessor of the Faith amongst them, and he was not unknown to several families in the town, but his greatest friend was undoubtedly Mère de Saumaise. Nor need this surprise us. Mère de Saumaise received counsel from him, and in turn gave him much sound advice for his soul as well as body. A short time after this visit to Dijon Father de la Colombière wrote: “*March 23rd, 1679.*—A thousand thanks for the good counsels you give me for body and soul. Continue, dear Mother, to remind me from time to time of that which it is so important for me not to forget, and which I nevertheless do so easily forget; do not be in the least afraid that I shall not take it all in good part.” After all, Our Lord had chosen Mère de Saumaise to be the Superior of His chosen confidante, St. Margaret Mary. Father de la Colombière knew this well, and thought little of his own lights compared with hers. Had not saintly men before him taken counsel of St. Teresa, and more than one Pope turned for guidance to St. Catherine of Siena?

Mère de Saumaise was not unmindful of the joy it would give her Community to hear from the lips of the confessor of Christ

an account of the persecution to which he owed his exile. She asked him to give the nuns a conference. He did so, and all were encouraged by the burning words of the saintly man.

Then came the turn of the novices. Mère de Saumaise was filling the post of Novice Mistress besides that of the Superior. Whilst Father de la Colombière was speaking to the novices Mère de Saumaise was called away; immediately he stopped speaking of his own experiences and congratulated the novices on having such a holy woman to guide them, and even said that he wished he could have the same privilege.

One of the Dijon Community who listened to Father de la Colombière on this occasion was Sister Jeanne Madeleine Joly, who later became one of the most zealous promoters of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. She was the first to paint a picture and compose a small book of devotions in honour of this Divine Heart.

From Dijon Father de la Colombière made his way to Paray. The Jesuit Rector at this time was Père Pierre Polla, who had lived with him at Avignon, and who now gave him a warm welcome, as indeed did all his friends at Paray. To each in turn Father de la Colombière gave his time and attention: to his old and valued friend the parish priest, to the members of the Congregation he had founded in honour of Our Lady, to the nuns of the Ursuline Convent, to the nuns at Charolles, to his friend and penitent Mademoiselle de Bisefranc, to her sister who had lately entered the Ursuline Convent, to every member of the Visitation Community, and above all to St. Margaret Mary.

"I only saw Sister Alacoque once," he wrote to Mère de Saumaise, "but that visit gave me great consolation. I found her extremely humble and submissive, with a great love for the Cross and of contempt. These are marks of the good spirit which leads her, and they have never deceived anyone."

St. Margaret Mary's trials had increased since the departure of Mère de Saumaise for Dijon. Mère Greyfié, who replaced Mère de Saumaise as Superior, hesitated in believing that St. Margaret Mary was really led by God. Thus uncertainty, together with most painful temptations, was the cause of acute

suffering to the humble Saint, and Father de la Colombière's visit could hardly have been more opportune. He quickly reassured Mère Greyfie and put an end to her doubts. "What does it matter," he said, "even though it were an illusion of the devil, provided it produce in her the same effect as would be produced by the grace of God? But there is no appearance of the devil having any part in it, for in that case, in wishing to deceive her, he would be deceiving himself, for humility, simplicity, exact obedience, and mortification are not the fruits of the spirit of darkness." "At these words," says Mère Greyfie, "I felt greatly reassured, because whatever course I took, I always found Sister Margaret Mary faithful in the practice of these virtues, and in the exact observance of her duties."

Having set at rest the doubts of the Superior, Father de la Colombière turned to console St. Margaret Mary. He asked to see her in the confessional, so as to avoid the presence of others at the interview. They had much to say to one another, these two holy souls who were bound together by the closest spiritual bonds. St. Margaret Mary had to make known not only her temptations and trials, but also the long chain of graces which she had received in the last two years. On his side, Father de la Colombière had to counsel and console as well as thank his spiritual Sister for the messages she had sent him from Our Lord Himself; both felt the need of speaking to each other of the love of that Heart to Whom their lives were consecrated. Their interview was prolonged, but it was the only one. Two or three days later Father de la Colombière resumed his journey to Lyons, where he arrived about March 11th, 1679. He was well satisfied with his visit to Paray, and writes to his usual correspondent, Mère de Saumaise: "I was very ill when I arrived at Paray, but after two days' rest I was so much better that for eight days I worked from morning till night without any inconvenience. I cannot tell you how many consolations God sent me. I found everything going on admirably; great progress had been made in my absence. You can imagine that in eight days I had not time for long conversations with everyone, but, by the mercy of God, the little I was able to say

satisfied all and renewed their fervour. May God be eternally praised for this."

Father de la Colombière was received with open arms at Lyons: Père de Camaret (the Provincial), Père Galien (the Rector), and all the Community of the College of the Holy Trinity looked upon him as a confessor of the Faith, and venerated him no less for his imprisonment and sufferings than for his virtues and labours. All considered it a privilege to have him in their midst. He was appointed spiritual Father to the philosophers, who numbered fifteen or sixteen; but whether the appointment took place at once or only in the month of October is a little uncertain. Probably it was in October, as Father de la Colombière was ill when he arrived at Lyons, and spent part of the spring at St. Symphorien, only returning to the College at the end of May. The best-known, perhaps, of these young philosophers was Joseph de Galliffet, who afterwards wrote his famous book on devotion to the Sacred Heart, and to whom, also, we owe the publication of the Memoir of St. Margaret Mary written by herself. Père de Galliffet had the greatest esteem and affection for Father de la Colombière, as indeed had all the philosophers; and the affection was not all on their side, for on January 10th, 1680, their spiritual Father wrote to Père Chasternes at Avignon: "I am greatly edified by the fervour and piety of the Juniors whom you have sent me. I wish I were capable of helping them to retain all you have taught them; but your prayers now must do what your instructions and example did for them when they were in the noviciate."

Each year the young Jesuit philosophers gave up eight days of their holidays to making a retreat. In 1679 and 1680 the exercises were given to them by Father de la Colombière. On one or other of these occasions he wrote out for them the following advice:

"I. The Spiritual Exercises should only be made at certain times, when the soul is drawn by God towards solitude through disgust with worldly things, or by some light or extraordinary movement which leads it to reform and sanctify itself, and

seeks means to follow the attraction, or when, touched by the sight of its disorders, it conceives desires to be truly penitent.

“2. At such times it is needful to enter into retreat in order to give ourselves leisure to examine what is taking place in us, what this grace requires from us, and how it may be performed.

“3. It is a very good disposition with which to go into solitude to have the design of changing our life and sanctifying ourselves; but those who are not in this disposition should, I think, go through the Exercises in order to examine seriously into the state of their soul; to consider calmly whether they are in the way of salvation; whether, living as they do, they are not running some risk as to eternity; whether there is anything which ought to be changed, or whether they may live in tranquillity and follow the course upon which they have entered.

“4. To apply oneself solely to this, and not to admit any other matter. It is right to give to God and to our souls the whole application which the most important affair that we have to deal with in our whole life demands.

“5. Complete solitude.

“6. Purity of heart and perfect exactness in keeping all the rules and additions; it is only for eight days. A slight fault may interpose a serious obstacle to the light from Heaven and repel God.

“7. Great indifference about consolations. Not to expect any, and to be prepared for all kinds of weariness, aridity, and desolation. We deserve them, and if it shall please God to send them, it will be eight days' exercise of patience and penance.

“8. If we are not resolved to become Saints by means of these Exercises, we must at least be ready to receive the graces which it may please God to bestow upon us therein, and not to resist the good movements which we may receive from the Holy Spirit through His infinite mercy. My God, I feel no desire for this high perfection, perhaps I have even a great distaste for it; but if by an effect of Thy Divine goodness Thou wilt change me, inspire me with more courage, and separate me, in spite of myself, from the world, I hope that I shall allow Thee to do so. Thou knowest what means must be used to

conquer me; these means are in Thy hands, Thou art the Master. A perfect life alarms me; Thou canst rid me of this vain fear, and render all that seems to me repulsive pleasing to me; Thou alone canst do it.

“9. Great confidence in God. He sought me when I fled from Him, amidst the occupations of the world; He will not forsake me when I go to seek Him in retreat, or at least cease to fly from Him.

“10. Great humility in making oneself known to the Director, even if one has nothing else to say but that one feels nothing, sees nothing, and is inclined to nothing good; to keep to the points which he gives and to the reading he prescribes, even when one would consider something else better. This simplicity has great merit, and brings down great blessings.

“11. The day which precedes the Exercises, one must excite in oneself the desire for solitude: *Quis dabit mihi pennas?*—‘Who will give me wings?’ The desire for perfection: *Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt justitiam quoniam ipsi saturabuntur*—‘Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.’”

So wise and holy a director could scarcely fail in producing the fruits of holiness in the souls he cared for with such tender solicitude. He taught them the practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart, thus sowing the seeds which were later to yield so rich a harvest. It was he who spoke to them of the Communion of Reparation on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi. It is true that the devotion was not publicly known until later, but just as the seeds scattered by the autumn winds do not germinate until the spring—so the devotion to the Sacred Heart, sown in humility and obscurity by St. Margaret Mary and Father de la Colombière, unfolded its beauty in God’s own good time, and in our day has developed both its flowers and its fruit.

The rest of Father de la Colombière’s work at Lyons was for the most part done by letter. He directed a few people who came to visit him, among others the Duchess of Aumont, to whom he taught the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and

himself visited several religious Communities, notably that of the Visitation at Vellecour.

The letters written at this period are full of interest. Many of them plead for the Communion of Reparation on the day mentioned by Our Lord. Indeed, much may be gathered from the following extracts concerning the earnestness with which the holy Jesuit tried to propagate the devotion so dear to him:

To his sister: "I advise you to go to Holy Communion on the day after the Octave of Corpus Christi to repair the irreverences which are committed against Jesus Christ during that Octave, when He is exposed on the altars of the whole Christian world. The practice was recommended to me by a person, of extraordinary sanctity, who assured me that all those who would give Our Lord this mark of love would derive great fruit from it. Try gently to persuade your friends to the same practice. I hope many Communities will begin it this year and always continue it." Thus it was that the devotion to the Sacred Heart was established at Condrien. The annals of the Convent have the following entry: "Father de la Colombière neglected nothing to make us understand the great benefits we should derive from the devotion to the Sacred Heart."

At Charolles, it was a letter to Mère de Thelis, the Superior, that introduced the devotion to the Visitation Convent. "I am only writing to you to-day to beg you to get all your Community to make an extra Communion on the day after the Octave of Corpus Christi, not for my intentions, but to repair as far as possible all the irreverences which have been committed against Jesus Christ during the Octave. I assure you that this proof of love will draw down great blessings upon you. It is a practice I would counsel you to adopt for the rest of your life. I cannot write more at present."

It will perhaps be remembered that Father de la Colombière had sent an English lady to the Ursulines at Paray who was to enter as a lay-Sister and remain completely unknown. Through no fault of hers, the Ursulines had refused to keep this postulant, who had accordingly, and with the advice of both St. Margaret

Mary and of Father de la Colombière, entered the Visitation Convent at Charolles, taking the name of Sister Marie. It was by a letter to her that her director inaugurated the devotion at Charolles: "If your Reverend Mother thinks well, receive Our Lord on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, in reparation for the irreverences which have been committed towards the adorable Body of Jesus Christ, exposed on our altars during that Octave. I should be very glad to think that you will practise this devotion, and that you will continue it all your life, when you are allowed to do so. I hope that you will reap great fruit from this Communion."

The next year, in writing probably to the Novice-mistress at Charolles before Sister Marie's Profession, he says: "Do you remember the devotion I recommended last year to Sister Marie for the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi?"

Mère de Saumaise introduced the devotion both at Dijon and at Moulins, after receiving it herself from St. Margaret Mary. On May 26th, 1679, Father de la Colombière wrote to her: "I have reminded myself of what was recommended to me with regard to the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi. I am sure you will not forget it."

Several letters to the English Sister Marie are dated from Lyons:

"MY DEAR SISTER,—If we only had a true knowledge of ourselves and would call to mind all the faults we have committed, how far we should be from minding if everyone were preferred to us. Can Our Lord love us better than by sending us crosses and humiliations which we can offer up as penances, and which will spare us confusion at the day of judgment, if only we do not try to prevent them, and if we submit to all that come upon us during life."

Another time he exhorts her to confidence: "I was really grieved on reading your letter, and not entirely for the faults you have committed; that which grieves me most is the pitiful state to which your faults have brought you on account of your want of confidence in the goodness of God and in the loving generosity with which you know He receives even those

who have most grievously offended Him. In your present dispositions I recognize the artifices and extreme malice of the evil one, who tries to profit by your fall by tempting you to despair, instead of the spirit of God, which would lead you to humility and compunction, and inspire you to seek the means to repair the evil you have done. It is great, dear Sister, but it is not irreparable. It may even be an admirable remedy to cure you entirely of all pride and presumption. If I were in your place, this is how I would console myself. I would say to God with confidence: 'Lord, here is a soul which is in this world to exercise Thy divine mercy and to glorify it in the face of heaven and earth. Others may glorify Thee by showing forth the strength of Thy grace by their fidelity, and by their constancy proving how gentle and generous Thou art towards those who are faithful to Thee. As for me, I will glorify Thee by making known how good Thou art towards sinners, and that Thy mercy is greater than all the malice of the evil one, that nothing is capable of exhausting it; that no fall, however shameful and wicked, need cause a sinner to despair of pardon. I have grievously offended Thee, O my dear Redeemer! But I should be still more wicked if I outraged Thee by thinking that Thou art not merciful enough to pardon me. In vain will Thy enemy and mine try to tempt me to this. I will lose all, rather than the hope I have in Thy mercy. If I should fall a hundred times and my crimes were a hundred times worse than they are, I would still hope in Thee.' "

Sister Marie had many trials to go through before reaching her Profession; Father de la Colombière sustains her amid them all: "Laugh at the vain fears your enemy suggests about the future. He fears the sacrifice you are about to make, and until you have made it he will not despair of trying to withdraw you from the haven to which Our Lord is leading you, he will not cease to torment you until you are bound to Jesus Christ and His cross by indissoluble bonds. Listen, then, my dearest daughter in the Heart of Jesus Christ, listen to the voice of your Heavenly Father and to the Command I give you in His Name: as soon as you have read my letter, go before the Altar, where dwells your infinitely lovely and perfect

Spouse, Who loves you as you are and desires to have you for His spouse—and there, without waiting any longer, vow to him in secret to make your profession on the day arranged for it. By this means you will frustrate all the plans of the devil, and he will obtain nothing by his importunate temptations. I trust in our good Master that after this step you will be at peace and able to prepare for the holy nuptials you hope to celebrate with the Lamb of God.

“Be at peace, my dear child; I am incapable of taking a dislike to a soul whom God loves, and who has been confided to my care by His goodness. You will be my child till death, and I will give you, for the love of Jesus Christ, all the care of a good father. Your own father has never had for you as much tenderness as God has given me for your salvation and perfection.”

Later on the lessons of detachment and self-sacrifice are more insisted upon: “Your letters always give me great joy, because by them I learn that Our Lord continues to let you share in His cross—that is to say, in His love. You have at last found the true secret of happiness, which is to abandon without reserve to God’s mercy, both the past and the future.”

One letter, dated “Spring, 1680,” was written to Mademoiselle Catherine de Biseiranc. She had written to tell him that Mademoiselle de Lyonne had at last actually entered the Visitation Convent.

“I learn with joy that she has entered God’s house, and this joy is not diminished by what you tell me of her suffering. Her sacrifice is so much the more precious and agreeable to the Spouse to Whom she gives herself. . . . You ask me if I am going to Paray. At present I can say nothing for certain. Both you and she must submit yourselves to God’s will, and let us accustom ourselves to do without everything except Him. It is much, having been so near death, that He leaves me the strength to write to you so that we can encourage each other to love Him till the end. I do not wish you to come to see me, neither you nor anyone else. I do not see what good it would do for you to see me in order to calm your soul upon the subject about which I have so often begged you to be silent. It

seems to me that my request should suffice to withdraw you from anxiety. If God does not allow this, throw yourself into the arms of His Providence and suffer with patience. As to depriving yourself of your fortune, you have yourself answered all I could say. What do you fear? Does poverty seem to you such a great evil? Jesus Christ chose it for love of you. Do you think you will be doing too much in doing what He did for you? Do you consider yourself unhappy in resembling Him? The fault you committed in showing your trouble is a great infidelity; it is not without remedy: humble yourself. If you become more humble you will profit by your faults."

Lastly, we have two notes to St. Margaret Mary: "God wishes that you should abandon yourself entirely to His mercy, and should pay no more attention to what you feel. I think it would be wronging His unspeakable goodness if I allowed myself to think that He would permit you to fall into hardness of heart—He, Who loves you so tenderly and Who has so great a desire to save us. It might happen that our infidelities would deserve such a state, but we cannot judge of so good a Father by the excess of our ingratitude."

"It is worthy of His infinite Goodness that He should give Himself intimately to souls who have nothing to attract Him except His own gifts and the pleasure He has in doing good. I have never looked upon the graces shown to you by Jesus Christ as belonging to you, but rather as the outcome of the boundless love of Him Who delights to be with sinners, Who makes His grace to abound where sin has abounded; Who fills the meanest vessels so that no creature may glorify itself in His presence, and that no one may look upon His gifts as a soul as belonging to the soul that receives them."

By letters such as these Father de la Colombière continued his work for souls until the evening closed in and the night came—that night which was so soon to give place to the dawn of Eternal Day.

CHAPTER XXV

Gold in the Furnace: 1680—1681

“The Lord takes pleasure in attaching a great price to his [Father de la Colombière’s] sufferings by uniting them to His own, so as to shed them like dew on the seed he has sown.”—ST. MARGARET MARY.

FATHER FABER says somewhere that none of God’s Saints enjoyed robust health. Whether this is true or not, it seems certain that the great majority of the Saints, both men and women, suffered physically in one way or another for a longer or shorter period of their lives. Father de la Colombière was certainly not among the small minority who won their crown without much bodily suffering. He had never been strong. As a child we may recall how the long walk to and from the College at Vienne was thought to be too much for him. His course of preaching before his tertianship was cut short on account of the severe headaches to which he was subject at the time. What he suffered in England from the climate, and finally from his imprisonment, is fresh in our minds, and it will be remembered that the English doctors had declared that a return to his native country would effectually restore his health. In this they were entirely mistaken. The young Jesuit—he was only thirty-eight—had practically finished his active work when he set foot on French soil in January, 1679. Henceforth he was to suffer for his Lord, and the suffering was to be particularly hard to bear. He was in the prime of life—talented, active, zealous. He had a large circle of friends in England, who all desired him to return and work among them, and he himself had some faint hope that he might eventually return to the “Country of Crosses.” In his own Province he was held in veneration as a confessor of the Faith. Many posts of trust would have been open to him if only he had had the health to fill them. But it was just this sacrifice that God asked of him. Moreover, he was not entirely laid up, so that once for all he could resign

himself to his cross. No! his was a harder trial. He had just enough strength, as a rule, to go about, but was subject to constant relapses, feeling one day well and the next hardly able to bear up at all. This, and the thousand humiliations which accompany such a state, formed the furnace in which the gold of his virtue had to be tried and cleansed, and so made fit for the eternal reward so soon to be his.

Our Lord was well content with His servant, as the following letter from St. Margaret Mary to Mère de Saumaise shows: “. . . This divine Will also reigns in Father de la Colombière’s sufferings, for, recommending him to God, I heard these words: ‘The servant is not greater than His Master, and there is nothing more advantageous to him than conformity with his Master.’ So that although from a human point of view his health would seem to be more to the glory of God, his sufferings are really far more so. For there is a time for everything: a time to suffer and a time to act; a time to sow, and another to water and cultivate. This is what he is doing at present; for the Lord takes pleasure in attaching a great price to his sufferings by uniting them to His own, in order to shed them like dew on the seed he has sown in so many places, and also to increase love in his own soul.”

Devotion to the Sacred Heart consists mainly of love and reparation, and both these are shown by work and suffering. Love produces holiness and an ardent desire to promote the glory of God. Reparation is made chiefly by suffering and immolation. Father de la Colombière immolated himself in his illness in a way he could never have done by his work, and God accepted his sacrifice and made it bear fruit a hundredfold.

When the invalid arrived in Lyons he was exhausted by all he had gone through. “I was worse when I arrived than I had been since I left England. I had had an attack of hæmorrhage again and was almost as ill as I was the first time. It seems to me that I am a little better the last two days. Since I came here the doctor has ordered me to eat meat even on Fridays and Saturdays. Soon they think I shall be able to drink a little asses’ milk, which I hope may give me some relief, God’s Will be done!”

By March 21st he was slightly better, and his Superiors sent him to St. Symphorien. There he spent a month at least, probably longer, with his own people. He went to see his sister at Condrien, but for the rest gave himself up conscientiously to the care of his health. Sister Marguerite Elizabeth's anxieties had been roused at the sight of her brother's extreme weakness, and she was not long before writing to beg news of him. He answered: "As for what you want to know, it is hardly worth while telling you. My health is of little consequence to others and may be very harmful to myself. Do pray to God that, well or ill, I may faithfully correspond to His merciful designs. As for you, my dear sister, try to make better use of your health than I did of mine. Love God and serve Him for yourself and for me. Often offer Him my heart with yours, and ask Him to accept my unfulfilled desires for my own perfection and for the salvation of the world."

The secret of Father de la Colombière's interior life escapes him in these words. He offered himself to suffer for the salvation of the world. In a similar case Our Lord told St. Alphonsus Rodriguez that he would accept his desire to convert the whole world as if he had been able to accomplish it. Did not Father de la Colombière share in the same blessing? The devotion to the Sacred Heart of which he was the apostle is one of the most powerful means of salvation the world has ever known.

St. Margaret Mary did not leave her spiritual Father without guidance in this time of suffering. A note to Mère de Saumaise tells us of a letter Father de la Colombière received from Paray in the spring of 1679:

"As regards myself, she bids me, on the part of Our Divine Master, to think no more of the past, to make no plans for the future, and for the present to take care of an invalid whom God has committed to my care, so as to give me opportunities of charity and patience. She adds that the invalid is myself, and that I am to do all I can to get better, without any scruple. I follow her advice blindly."

The rest and change did him good, and Father de la Colombière returned to Lyons. But if his sufferings were lessened

or ceased and his strength returned, it was only for a very short time. Again and again he had relapses. Sometime in 1680 he wrote to Sister Marie: "You ask for news of my health. I tell you candidly that my frequent relapses have made me understand that God does not wish to make use of me, and that I am unworthy of being employed to guide souls."

These frequent relapses explain the apparent contradictions of Father de la Colombière's comments on his health. We read: "It seems to me that I am much better. . . ." And again: "I am better than I have yet been." While very shortly after come the words: "My health is still very weak. . . ." "I cannot yet write long letters. . . ." "I am still taking remedies, and am obliged to begin taking asses' milk again." What an exercise of patience this varying state must have been to him can only really be understood by those who have had a like experience. Father de la Colombière's life was governed by the Will of His Lord; nevertheless, it cost him great efforts to be perfectly docile in his suffering state: "There is a great harvest to be reaped everywhere, and I find the greatest difficulty in refraining from taking part in its gleanings. Nevertheless, I am told to be silent, and I resolve to be so, following your advice. If Providence should recall me to the Country of Crosses, I am quite ready to go. But Our Lord requires a greater sacrifice of me than this, and that is to make up my mind to do nothing if it is His Will. I must be ready to die, and to sacrifice in death my zeal and the great desire I have to work for the sanctification of souls, or I must be ready to live on in silence, weak and ill, being no more than a useless burden in whatever house I find myself."

In the spring of 1680 his Superiors sent him again to stay with his brother at St. Symphorien. Father de la Colombière had not quailed before the horrors of an English prison, but he did falter before the attentions and comforts with which he was surrounded in his home. "You see I am staying with my people again, which is for me a great subject of confusion. Instead of edifying them by my words and manner of living, the doctors order me to be silent and to talk only to amuse myself. Now, really, is not that a great humiliation? I

understand that a spiritual person might make of such a life a sort of purgatory which would go far towards his purification. May God be eternally blessed for His infinite patience in bearing with me in spite of my uselessness and the imperfections I daily discover in myself."

To a brother religious who had been staying at St. Symphorien with him, but who had returned to Lyons, he wrote: "I suppose you are expecting me to tell you how sorry I am that you have left. But no, dear Father, on the contrary, I rejoice more each day at being separated from you. It was so very difficult to be detached from everything while you were here, and I feel now that it was not God only who sweetened my visit as long as I had you for my companion. You are too enlightened not to see in this the subject of my joy. It is such an immense good to possess God only, and to be deprived of all pleasures that one may experience outside Him, that I am obliged to count as an advantage every loss which helps me to this state. It is not the fault of Divine Providence that I am not completely detached, but you know, that in default of everything else, one still clings to oneself."

In several letters to St. Margaret Mary and Mère de Saumaise, Father de la Colombière lifts a little more of the veil which concealed his interior life during these closing years.

To Mère de Saumaise: "You have prayed so much for my return to health that I begin to think God will hear you at last. I am better than I have been since I left England; but you will have done nothing if I only return to the state I was in before. You must pray still more that I may have the grace to live as you know I ought. I shall need the special help of prayer if I am cured, so that being in health I may live in such a manner that I may not regret my cure. However, if I knew that in the future there would be one single fibre of my being which clung to the world and not wholly to God, I would rather die a thousand times."

Two letters to St. Margaret Mary give us a more complete picture: "I deprived myself till to-day of the consolation I should have had in writing to you, because I thought that God asked this small sacrifice of me. May His Infinite Mercy make

me always faithful to His Will. But, alas ! I am living a strange life, and I fear that the regret it causes me and the complaints I make about it, far from justifying me before God, only render me more culpable. I do not know what it is that prevents me from becoming holy and advancing in the ways of God ; I think that the desire I have to do so cannot be sufficiently disinterested.

“ Many desires arise in my soul of undertaking many things in expiation of my sins, and to glorify our loving Master ; but in my present state of health I fear they may be illusions, and that Our Lord does not count me worthy of doing anything for His love.

“ It seems to me that nothing would be difficult to me if I only knew what was asked of me. My only work is to try and recover my health, as I have been ordered ; but I have reason to think that I commit many laxities under this pretext. I am growing older and am still very far from the perfection of my state of life. I cannot attain to that forgetfulness of self which would give me access to the Heart of Jesus. Beg Our Good Master for me that I may do nothing against His Will, and that for the rest He will dispose of me according to His good pleasure. Thank Him for the state in which He has placed me. Illness was a thing absolutely necessary for me ; without it I do not know what I should have become. I am sure it is one of the greatest mercies God has shown me. If I had only profited by it, it would have sanctified me.”

A little later he wrote again : “ As for my interior state, in which I do not doubt you are as interested as you say you are, I really think that if you could see it, you would feel compassion for me. I have good desires to glorify our great Master, but I do not know how to accomplish them. I have even reason to fear that these desires are not disinterested, and that they come rather from a wish to emerge from the obscure and humble life I am leading at present, than from any true zeal ; for after all, if I did well the small employment given to me, I should perhaps do more good than I could by more laborious and less hidden occupations. I should like to be able to follow common life in everything, above all in what regards regular prayer, especially as I am better than I have been

for some time. But on the other hand, as I so often have relapses, I fear that my health may not be sufficiently re-established, and that there is illusion in wanting to resume common life. What I find best in my present state is the great humiliation both interior and exterior. I understand that that is an inestimable treasure. But ask Our Lord to make me love it for love of Him, and then, if it be to His glory, to augment it day by day until it is entire, without having any regard for my repugnance and my unworthiness."

In his last letter to Mère de Saumaise, Father de la Colombière gives here the result of his own experiences:

"As to the counsels you ask me to give, I must tell you that since I have been ill I have only learnt one thing, and that is that we cling to ourselves by many imperceptible little threads, and that if God did not do it for us, we should never break them, we do not even recognize them; that God alone can sanctify us, and that it is no small thing sincerely to desire that God may do in us all that is necessary for our sanctification. As for ourselves, we have neither light nor strength sufficient to accomplish it."

These being the dispositions of the holy Jesuit, it is not surprising that the cleansing fires did their perfecting work in his soul.

Slowly but surely the dross of human weakness was purged from the precious gold of his many virtues, and the soul of the apostle of the Sacred Heart was made ready to receive its reward.

CHAPTER XXVI

"Well done, thou Good and Faithful Servant": 1682

"It is sweet to die after having had a lifelong devotion to the Heart of Him Who is to be our Judge."—ST. MARGARET MARY.

ALTERNATE relapses and then short periods of apparently better health brought Father de la Colombière to the Easter of 1681, which fell that year on April 6th. On that day a severe attack of hæmorrhage so weakened him that all work and nearly all correspondence became impossible. A new phase of illness had begun. Every care was lavished upon him by his Superiors, but with hardly any appreciable result. In August it was decided to send him to Paray to see if the purer air would benefit his lungs. God, Who "reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly," was thus ordering events so that His servant might spend the last few months of his life in the place above all others dear to him—that town where the Sacred Heart had so lovingly revealed the treasures of His love for all mankind.

On his arrival Father de la Colombière found Père Polla still Rector, but before the scholastic year opened he was replaced by Père Bourguinet—a man of great zeal and piety, and who had, moreover, no small esteem and affection for the invalid now committed to his care. The other members of the Community were Père Philibert le Fèvre, who taught and preached; Père Claude Vuillard, who taught humanities; and Père Antoine du Port, the prefect of studies and the one appointed to go out giving missions.

When, in 1679, Father de la Colombière had passed ten days at Paray, all had hoped, in spite of his illness and evident marks of exhaustion, that rest and the more favourable climate of his native land would soon restore to him the health he had lost during the hardships of his life in England.

In August, 1681, this illusion was no longer possible. The apostle was stricken unto death, and the slight improvement

which showed itself in the mild days of early autumn gave no real hopes of a cure.

One of his first visits was to the Visitation Convent to see Mademoiselle de Lyonne. The account of this interview has already been given. Twice only in these last months of his life did he see St. Margaret Mary. He had been prodigal of his time and care towards her when she needed him most. Now that the time of the great revelations of the Sacred Heart was over, she had not so much need of direction, and Father de la Colombière felt, perhaps, in his humility and detachment that it was best for both of them to see little of each other; on her side, St. Margaret Mary was far too docile to God's Will to wish it otherwise. A year earlier, on writing to her director and receiving no answer, the humble nun had written to Mère de Saumaise: "You ask for news of the Reverend Father de la Colombière, whom I recommend to your prayers. He tells Madame de L—— that his health is not yet re-established. I have had no letters from him. Not that I have not written to him, but he has not seen fit to answer me. But however he treats me, I am always content, because I know we both want only God's Will, to which he is very submissive."

One little incident which occurred at this time shows us that Father de la Colombière had sometimes prophetic insight into the souls of others. Mademoiselle Catherine de Bisefranc had a little niece called Suzanne. She was extremely interested in this child and insisted on her receiving a holy education. When Father de la Colombière was Superior at Paray, Suzanne was often taken to receive his blessing. In 1681, on his return to the town, Mademoiselle de Bisefranc hastened to take the child to see him for the last time. Suzanne was dressed with more than ordinary care, and her hair, which was very beautiful, had been curled for the occasion. Father de la Colombière laid his hand on the curly head, saying in a prophetic tone: "This little head will one day wear a very different head-dress." Suzanne, aged seven and a half, never forgot these words. She took them as a prediction that she would one day be a nun, and cherished the hope in the depths of her heart. She afterwards entered the Visitation Convent

at Paray, where she lived a holy religious life for forty-eight years.

In spite of his weakness, Father de la Colombière did his best to help one of the Visitation nuns to make a private retreat. He sent her a copy of the paper he had drawn up for the philosophers at Lyons, and told her to make up her mind to live as a Saint during her seven or eight days of retreat: "The least infidelity may spoil all and put an insurmountable obstacle to the graces God has prepared for you." He begs her prayers and promises his, so that Our Lord may fill her with His love and inspire her with so great a desire to suffer and so constant a conformity to His Will, that she may fear nothing—neither life nor death—in the future. A fresh attack of hæmorrhage, before the retreat was over, put an end to all hope of his going to see her. He wrote to her instead: "You will lose nothing. Our Lord, Who is infinitely good, will more than supply for my absence. He wants us to put all our confidence in Him, and this is why He takes away the help we might have got from others. I see quite well that I am good for nothing, and that I only spoil the work put in my hands, because He takes from me all possibility of working. May His holy and loving Will be done; and may ours, however good in appearance, be annihilated and sacrificed to His good pleasure. I pray God with all my heart that He may inspire you with a sincere and perfect love for this adorable and sovereign Will, so that it may reign in you absolutely, and may triumph over all the desires and movements of your heart. Please ask Him to grant me the same grace, so that, being dead to ourselves, He alone, in Whom I am your humble servant, may live in us."

Towards the middle of December the invalid wrote to a religious who had begged for news of his health: "As to myself, I am never free from a troublesome cough and continual oppression. From time to time there are slight variations, and I am a little better or a little worse. I cannot go out and can only speak with difficulty, but my appetite is good and in other respects my health is fairly good. I cannot tell you if this air suits me, because I am continually in a room with a fire. It is true that two months ago my strength and

the good weather enabled me to take a few walks, and they did me good, but the damp and rainy weather soon replunged me into the state I was in before. They have been obliged to dress and undress me for five months now, as I am unable to do it myself. But I could not be in better hands than I am. All the Fathers and even the seculars vie with each other to give me every possible care, even to excess. We will see what God will send us with the spring weather. The person whose letters I have told you about (St. Margaret Mary) has always said up to now that she was at the point of giving up praying for me, because the more she prayed, the worse I became. About a month and a half ago, when I went to see her, she said that Our Lord had told her that if I were well, I should glorify Him by my zeal, but that being ill, He glorified Himself in me. Nevertheless, she counselled me to take extreme care of my health, and even recommended me not to say Mass any more, as I had been doing during the octave of St. Francis Xavier, but to content myself with going to Holy Communion every day.

“This morning a friend of Sister Margaret Mary told me that she (the Saint) greatly hoped to obtain my cure from God, and that she had spoken of it as a thing about which she had no doubt.”

This looks as though Father de la Colombière himself still had some small hope of recovery—a thing quite consistent with entire conformity to God’s Will. But it was not to be. St. Margaret Mary’s prayers were heard in another and a better way.

After five months of experience the doctor, Monsieur Billet, concluded that Paray did not suit the patient. Doctor Billet was a staunch friend to the nuns of the Visitation. He often had to attend St. Margaret Mary and was in admiration of her heroic virtue. He proved himself no less a friend to the Jesuits. Arrangements were set on foot in January, 1682, for Father de la Colombière’s return to Lyons, so that from there he might be sent to some place more suitable for his health. In a letter which seems to be addressed to the Rector at Lyons, the invalid states the case as it then stood. After speaking of

the decision of the doctor, he continues: "Père Bourguignet, who is extraordinarily kind to me, will make a little difficulty about it. We shall probably have to wait until a comfortable carriage can be found and the weather is more favourable. However, there has not been time to think about the carriage yet, and perhaps Doctor Billet will be able to persuade Father Rector. Whatever happens, I am convinced I shall never get better here. You know that even before the doctor, who has so well studied my illness, had declared this to be so, I had always told you that I should only get relief in very clear and bracing air. It remains to be seen if Lyons will suit me. I have my doubts about it. Vienne seems to me to be more likely to suit my case, for Doctor Billet says that two or three months in bracing air will not suffice; I shall have to pass several years before nature has had time to recuperate. I put all into the hands of my Superiors, and only tell you this to comply with the Rule. I would have written to Father Provincial, if I had thought it necessary, but I wanted to tell you first. Do tell me what you think about it, and counsel me according to God's Will, so that my conscience may be relieved and that I may not die with the scruple of having broken my Rule."

On January 20th, 1682, St. Margaret Mary wrote to Mère de Saumaise, who had asked for news and sent a message to the invalid: "I gave Father de la Colombière your message, which gave him much joy. He was especially pleased to have news of you. He is still very ill. When he is a little better he will write to you. I have seen him twice; he can hardly speak: perhaps God so arranged it that He may be able to speak more intimately to his heart."

Père Bourguignet consented to let the invalid go. In accordance with the doctor's advice and the wishes of his brothers, his Superiors decided to send him to Vienne. Floris, the Archdeacon, in whose house Father de la Colombière was to stay, went to fetch his brother. An easy-running and comfortable carriage had been procured from Lyons, and the departure was fixed for January 29th, Feast of St. Francis of Sales, and a day dear to the heart of the invalid.

Fearing some public demonstration might take place if it was known that he was leaving the town, Father de la Colombière insisted that no one should be told of his departure but Mademoiselle de Bisefranc. Père du Pont broke the news to her, and she begged leave to tell St. Margaret Mary. Permission was granted, and Mademoiselle de Bisefranc hastened to the Convent. As soon as she heard it, St. Margaret Mary told her friend to go to Father de la Colombière and tell him from her not to leave Paray if it were possible to stay without disobeying the orders of his Superiors. The message was carried to the invalid, who dictated a few lines to his spiritual daughter, asking her for the reason of her decision. St. Margaret Mary sent him a note in reply, and the intended journey was abandoned. A few days later a grave relapse, accompanied by hæmorrhage and a high temperature, showed plainly the end was not far off. He lingered a week in the utmost patience and resignation. Then on the First Sunday of Lent a violent attack of hæmorrhage proved fatal. He was in the forty-second year of his age and the twenty-second of his religious life when on February 15th, 1682, about seven in the evening, he gave up his pure soul to God; and we may surely think that in dying he experienced the truth of St. Margaret Mary's words: "It is sweet to die after having had a life-long devotion to the Heart of Him Who is to be our Judge."

As early as five o'clock the next morning Mademoiselle de Bisefranc carried the news to the Visitation Convent. On hearing of his death the Saint exclaimed: "Pray, and get others to pray for him"; and she charged her friend to do all in her power to get back the last note she had sent to Father de la Colombière. Mademoiselle de Bisefranc went to the Jesuit house to ask for the note, but Père Bourguignet absolutely refused to give it up, saying that he would rather part with all the archives of the house. In order to explain his refusal he read the note to her. It ran thus: "He told me that it is here that He desires the sacrifice of your life." These words give to the Jesuit house at Paray its most glorious title to renown—the privilege of having been chosen by Christ Himself

as the place wherein the immolation of the apostle of His Sacred Heart was to be completed.

At ten o'clock on the same morning, February 16th, Mademoiselle de Bisefranc received the following note from St. Margaret Mary: "Weep for him no longer; rather pray to him and fear nothing, for truly he is more powerful to assist us than ever."

By the death of Father de la Colombière, St. Margaret Mary lost the best friend she ever had, the true Father of her soul and the brother given to her by the Sacred Heart Himself. Mère Greyfie was surprised that she did not beg to offer extra prayers and penances for the repose of his soul, and on asking the reason, St. Margaret Mary replied: "Dear Mother, he has no need of them. He is able to pray to God for us, for, through the goodness and mercy of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ, he is in a high place in heaven. Only to satisfy for some negligence in the exercise of Divine love, his soul was deprived of the sight of God from the moment it left his body until it was laid in the tomb." But we must not think that, Saint though she was, Margaret Mary did not feel the loss. Mère Greyfie assures us that she felt it deeply. "It was a terrible blow to her," she writes, "for she lost in him the best friend she had in the world. However, she did not grieve for him, since she loved her friends, not for herself, but for the glory of God and their advancement in Divine love. I never heard her regret him, but I often heard her rejoice over his happiness, in which she took part by giving thanks to the Sacred Heart for all the graces showered on her friend both during his life and at his death."

Comparing St. Margaret Mary's note to Mademoiselle de Bisefranc with the answer she gave to her Superior, Mère Greyfie, we see that Father de la Colombière was buried about ten o'clock on Monday morning, February 16th. The great idea that people had conceived of his virtue broke forth into spontaneous testimonies of veneration as soon as the news of his death was made known. The town council, on behalf of the people of Paray, begged that his body might be entombed in the parish church. But the Jesuits refused to give up their

precious treasure. His body was first buried in the College chapel, and his tomb soon became a place of pilgrimage for the faithful of the neighbourhood.

Thus died this friend of the Sacred Heart, crowning his holy life by a holy death. He had longed to shed his blood as a Martyr—he was allowed only to lose it by sickness; but who can tell that the sacrifice was not as great—nay, greater? He conformed himself not only to the Passion but the humiliation of His Lord, and Saint Margaret Mary did not hesitate to invoke him as a Saint, and to keep his anniversary as a feast-day for the rest of her life. She composed a litany in his honour, in which she does not hesitate to call him, “Victim of divine love,” “Man according to the Heart of God,” and “Glorious Martyr in desire.”

May we too, O Venerable Father, catch something of thy spirit and thy love, that, following in thy footsteps, we may deserve to die as thou didst, in the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXVII

Two Hundred Years and More

"Father de la Colombière has been proclaimed holy by all the people, although he cannot yet be canonized; but everyone hopes that in time he will be."—ST. MARGARET MARY.

FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE was buried in the Jesuit chapel at Paray, but his body did not remain long in its first resting-place. Little more than a month afterwards it was exhumed; the flesh had been consumed by quicklime, but the bones were collected and placed in a chest, which for some time was left where all could see it. Doctor Billet, who had proved himself so good a friend, was absent from Paray both at the time of Father de la Colombière's death and also at the exhumation of his bones. He begged Père Bourguignet to show him the relics; and on opening the coffer, the doctor took the skull into his hands, put his finger into the large hole and touched the substance of the brain, which was incorrupt. Dr. Billet declared that on withdrawing his finger it was perfumed by a most sweet scent resembling amber.

Exactly four years after the death of the venerable servant of God, Père de Langeron, who had succeeded Père Bourguignet as Rector, had the remains translated to a new chapel that was just finished. This was on February 16th, 1686. At this time a few relics were distributed secretly as pious souvenirs. St. Margaret Mary received one. She wrote to Mère de Saumaise: "I am delighted to think that you will possess some relics of Father de la Colombière, whose body the Jesuit Fathers have placed in their new church. They have given us—but it is a great secret—one of his ribs and a portion of his girdle. These I am willing to share with you, knowing you will guard them as they deserve because of your esteem for this great servant of God."

The new chapel at the Jesuit College was a great deal larger

than the old one, which could hardly hold thirty people, and in consequence many more people frequented it. Numbers came to pray at the tomb of the man whom they all looked upon as a Saint. "He is not canonized yet," they said, "but he certainly will be."

Soon extraordinary graces were obtained through the intercession of the friend of the Sacred Heart, and many favours attested his power with God. St. Margaret Mary was cured of a very painful gathered finger; and Sister Marie Rosalie de Lyonne was twice seized with sudden and violent illness, which entirely disappeared when she invoked her former director.

Soon it was not only the inhabitants of Paray, but people from all parts, who came to visit the tomb. "Gratitude in those who had received favours, and hope in those who asked for them, soon gave birth to a universal feeling of veneration and confidence towards the servant of God."

St. Margaret Mary was the first and most ardent in honouring, after his death, the friend and director she had received from Christ Himself. She always kept his feast on February 15th, and she composed prayers and a litany in his honour. The storm which rose up against her when she first gathered her novices around her to give exterior devotion to the Sacred Heart, was followed by the triumph of that Divine Heart, and at the same time by a manifestation of respect and confidence towards herself, and then her veneration for Father de la Colombière was shared by many. As early as 1687 the nuns at Paray began to use the prayers their holy Sister had composed. It was all done privately, of course; but by degrees, as the devotion to the Sacred Heart took root and spread, the feelings of veneration and confidence in the apostle who had spent his life to propagate it increased.

On July 2nd, 1688, Feast of Our Lady's Visitation, St. Margaret Mary had a vision. She gives us the account of it in a letter to Mère de Saumaise:

"*July, 1688.*—Having had the happiness to pass the whole Feast of the Visitation before the Blessed Sacrament, my Sovereign Master deigned to gratify His poor servant with

special graces from His loving Heart, which, drawing me within Its shelter, filled me with inexpressible delight.

“ It seemed to me that I saw an elevated place, spacious and most beautiful, in the centre of which was a throne of flames, and thereupon Jesus Christ showing the Wound of His Heart, from which issued such burning and brilliant rays that all the surroundings were enlightened and warmed. The Blessed Virgin was on one side and our Father, Saint Francis of Sales, on the other with the *saintly Father de la Colombière*; the daughters of the Visitation appeared to be in the place with their good angels at their sides, each holding a heart. The Blessed Virgin invited us by these maternal words: ‘ Come, my dear daughters, approach, for I wish to make you depositaries of the precious Treasure which the Divine Sun of Justice formed in my Virginal womb, in which He hid Himself for nine months before showing Himself to men !’ This Queen of goodness continued to speak to the daughters of the Visitation, showing them the Divine Heart and saying: ‘ This is the Divine Treasure which is specially manifested to you on account of the tender love my Son has for your Institute. Its members must not only enrich themselves with this Treasure, but they must distribute Its riches abundantly as far as lies in their power, trying even to enrich the whole world, without fearing that It will fail; the more they take, the more there will be to be taken.’

“ Then, turning towards Father de la Colombière, this dear Mother said to him: ‘ And you, the faithful servant of my Divine Son, have a great share in this precious Treasure, for it is given to the daughters of the Visitation to make It known and loved, it is reserved to the Fathers of your Society to make known Its utility and value, so that all may profit by It, receiving It with the respect and gratitude due to so great a benefit. In proportion as they shall do this, the Divine Heart will shed Its blessings and graces on their ministry. They will produce fruit beyond their labours and hopes, and at the same time they will receive abundant graces for their own salvation and perfection.’ ”

In what this great share in the treasure of the Sacred Heart consisted which Our Lady had declared to belong to Father

de la Colombière is shown by another letter written to Mère de Saumaise, on the future Feast of the Sacred Heart, the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi. St. Margaret Mary writes:

"*June 17th, 1689.*—Our Father de la Colombière has obtained that, after our dear Institute, the Fathers of the Society of Jesus shall be granted all the particular graces and privileges of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has promised that He will shower abundant blessings on the works of love with which they occupy themselves for the salvation of souls. This Divine Heart seems to have so ardent a desire to be known, loved, and adored, particularly by the Fathers of the Society, that, if I mistake not, It promises to shed the unction of His ardent love over their words, and to give them such powerful graces at the same time that their preaching shall be as a two-edged sword which will penetrate the most hardened hearts of obstinate sinners and bring forth fruits of penance which will purify and sanctify their souls. But for this, they must try to draw all their light from the inexhaustible fountain whence springs all the knowledge and holiness of the Saints."

A month later St. Margaret Mary returns again to the same subject in a letter to Père Croiset, S.J.

"*August 10th, 1689.*—Oh, if I could only tell you of the infinite riches hidden in this precious Treasure by which He rejoices and ennobles His friends! If we understood them, we should spare nothing to give Him what He so ardently desires. . . . It is reserved to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus to make known this precious Treasure from which the more one draws, the more is left. It therefore only remains to themselves to be enriched by the abundance of every kind of grace and blessing, for by the efficacious means which are given them they are able to acquit themselves perfectly, according to His desire, of their duties of the sacred calling. . . . He expects much of your Society on this subject [devotion to the Sacred Heart]. He has great designs. *This is why He made use of Father de la Colombière to begin the devotion to His adorable Heart*, and I hope that you will be one of those who will help to introduce it into the Society. . . ."

On February 23rd, 1689, she writes again to Mère de Saumaise: "I hope this Divine Heart will be an abundant source of grace and mercy to us. It seemed to me He promised this to Father de la Colombière on his feast-day, which I, by a special privilege of obedience, was able to celebrate in our Chapel from ten o'clock until four in the afternoon." And again: "It must be a great consolation to you to be so united to Father de la Colombière because he obtains in heaven, by his intercession, all that is done on earth for the glory of the Sacred Heart."

The deep love, confidence, and respect in which the people held Father de la Colombière after his death was increased by the publication in 1684 of his "Spiritual Retreat." His "Sermons" appeared about the same time, and have been constantly reprinted in France and translated into several languages.

The remains of the holy Jesuit rested in the Jesuit chapel at Paray from 1686 until 1763. Then at the suppression of the Society of Jesus the Superior, Père Hubert, confided them to the care of the nuns of the Visitation, who kept them in their Convent at Paray until, in 1792, they themselves were driven forth by the fury of the Revolution. They took with them the body of St. Margaret Mary as well as that of Father de la Colombière, and through many vicissitudes guarded them both until 1817. In that year some of the old nuns joined the Visitation Convent at Charité-sur-Loire. They were anxious to take the precious relics with them, but, authorized by the Bishop of Autun, the Mayor of Paray-le-Monial took the treasure from them and confided it to the care of the parish priest. For three months it lay in the Parish Church, and was then restored to the Convent as soon as the nuns had been able to return. In 1828 the Jesuits had the happiness of receiving the relics of their saintly brother. Again the Paray house belonging to the Jesuits was closed, and the Rector, Père Debrosse, confided the treasure once more to the Visitation nuns, not, however, before four large bones had been removed, which to-day are divided between the Jesuit houses at Paris and at Rome.

When the Jesuits were finally re-established at Paray, the

nuns gave them back the sacred deposit which had been in their hands since 1630. An inventory of the bones had been taken in 1865 by Monseigneur Bouange, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Autun. The relics were placed in a vault built to receive them. On November 29th, 1892, the ecclesiastical judges, charged with the apostolic process for the Beatification of Venerable Claude de la Colombière, had the bones taken from their resting-place and juridically examined. They were then replaced, and there they await the day—soon, we hope, to dawn—when they will be exposed to veneration on the altar.

The definite introduction of the Cause for the Beatification of Venerable Claude de la Colombière took place during the pontificate of Leo XIII. The Decree, dated January 8th, 1880, runs as follows:

“ Inflamed with the fire of that divine love which the loving Redeemer of mankind caused to spring from His Heart that it might extend over the whole world, Father Claude de la Colombière acquired even during his lifetime a great renown for holiness. Admitted in his youth to the Society of Jesus, he began immediately to walk with ardour in the path of perfection, and, at the same time, to offer the example of good works, by his teaching, by the purity of his life, and by his preaching of the word of God. He spared himself no labour, and although he was the butt of manifold calumnies and of impious persecution, he gained numerous souls to Jesus Christ. It was thus that he showed himself worthy to be chosen by God, not only to direct Blessed Margaret Mary in the ways of perfection, but also, and above all, to propagate with admirable zeal the devotion of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“ This renown for holiness, which was further established by graces and celestial favours obtained by his intercession of the Divine power, has not ceased since his death; on the contrary, it has increased day by day; and after about two centuries it subsists so living and complete that the Right Reverend the Bishop of Autun has undertaken on this subject to make the ordinary preliminary inquiries. This process is duly finished, and the report being laid before the Sacred Congregation of Rites, our most Holy Father, Leo XIII., has graciously con-

ceded that the examination of the opportuneness of naming the special Commission for the introduction of the Cause of the said servant of God, Father Claude de la Colombière, be submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in an ordinary séance without the vote of the help of the ordinary Consultors; and this although the delay of ten years has not yet elapsed since the day the process made by the Ordinary of Autun was presented to the Sacred Congregation; and in spite of the fact that the writings of the servant of God have not yet been collected and examined.

“It is for this reason, that at the solicitation of the Reverend Father Auguste Negroni, priest of the Society of Jesus and postulator of the Cause, and considering also the postulatory letters of many Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church and of a large number of Bishops and other persons illustrious by their ecclesiastical or civil dignity, his Eminence the Right Reverend Cardinal Mieczislas Ledochowski, Postulator of the Cause, has this day, in an ordinary séance of the Sacred Congregation of Rites held in the Vatican, proposed the following question: ‘Under the circumstances, must the Commission for the Cause be appointed?’ And the Sacred Congregation having maturely examined all, and having heard by word of mouth and by writing what the Reverend Father Laurent Salvati, ‘Promotor Fidei’ (Devil’s advocate), had to say, has judged it a duty to reply affirmatively under the date of the 18th of December, 1879, as following: ‘That the Commission should be appointed if it please the Sovereign Pontiff to ratify this decision.’

“The usual report having been made to Our Most Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., by the undersigned secretary, His Holiness has deigned to sanction the Decree of the Sacred Congregation; and, with his own hand, has signed the Decree appointing the Commission for the Introduction of the Cause of the said servant of God, the Venerable Father Claude de la Colombière, on the 8th of January, 1880.

(Signed.) “CARD: DOMINIQUE BARTOLINI,

“*Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.*

(Seal.) “PLACIDE RALLI,

“*Secretary.*”

During the spring of 1883 the first apostolic process was begun at Autun. This process is entitled: "De fama Sanctitatis virtutum et miraculorum in genere Ven. Patris de la Colombière sacerdotis Societatis Jesu."

Twelve witnesses from different countries came to make their depositions before the judges appointed by the Sovereign Pontiff.

The original of this process, closed and sealed in the usual form, is kept in the Archives of the Bishop's House at Autun. An authentic copy bearing the signature and the seal of the Bishop of Autun and of other delegated judges was sent to Rome and given into the hands of the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites to be examined and approved.

The part of the process proving the heroism of Father de la Colombière's virtues is complete, as is also the part relating to his writings. The remainder of the process, which relates to miracles wrought by his intercession, is not yet complete. May God hasten the day when the Church shall proclaim him "Blessed."

As lately as March, 1921, there appeared in the French *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* a short article written by the then postulator of the Cause, the Reverend Père Joseph Zelle, S.J.

Before the month was ended this zealous priest, who was eighty-five years of age, had been called to his reward. He died suddenly on Maundy Thursday, March 24th, 1921, when actually engaged in preaching a mission.

Père Zelle was a zealous promoter of the Cause of Father de la Colombière. He writes: "We invite all friends of the Sacred Heart to redouble their prayers so as to hasten the much desired Beatification. We have lately received good news from the Reverend Promoter-General of the Cause. . . . We may mention some recent cures. The Poor Clares at Paray made a Novena (to Ven. Claude) for a young girl who was ill, the sister of one of their out-Sisters. I saw her quite lately in good health. We have received a letter from the Director of the 'Ecole libre' at Cholet, who was radically cured of persistent enteric after a Novena to Venerable

Father de la Colombière. Do not let us forget that it is God Who makes Saints and Who glorifies them. Let us, then, recommend to Him this Cause so dear to us, the success of which would be a fitting crown to the feasts in honour of Saint Margaret Mary, and would contribute more and more to extend the Reign of the Sacred Heart."

In another paragraph of the same *Messenger* Père Zelle writes: "We are happy to note that during the feasts [those held in Paray, 1920-1921, in honour of the canonization of St. Margaret Mary] the pilgrims in crowds made their way to the tomb of Venerable Father de la Colombière. The Chapel which shelters it was more crowded than it has been for a long time. It seems as if the faithful did not consider their devotion to Saint Margaret Mary complete unless they had added their supplications and prayers for the speedy exaltation of her holy director."

Surely Père Zelle will, by his prayers, hasten the day when the Church will allow her children publicly to honour the "faithful servant" of the Divine Heart, whom St. Margaret Mary declared even on the day after his death to "have obtained a high place in heaven through the goodness and mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ Our Lord."

CHAPTER XXVIII

To-Day

“I will reign in spite of My enemies.”—OUR LORD TO ST. MARGARET MARY.

VERY slowly and imperceptibly did the seed sown by Father de la Colombière in the Chapel Royal of St. James's Court take root in Protestant England. For many years the devotion of the Sacred Heart lay hidden and cherished in the hearts of a faithful few. In 1697 Mary Beatrice of Modena petitioned the Holy See for a Mass in honour of the Sacred Heart, and for permission to keep the feast on the day asked for by Our Lord. Mary Beatrice was Queen of England then, but in exile, for she and her husband, James II., had been driven from the throne and obliged to take shelter in France. God's time had not yet come. England had dethroned not only earthly Sovereigns but the King of kings Himself, and England therefore has had to pay the penalties of long centuries of estrangement from the Church of Christ. But the Heart of Christ, “patient and of much mercy,” did not forsake the land soaked with the blood of so many who had laid down their lives for the Catholic Faith. Little by little the Sacred Heart strengthened Its hold in England, and to-day we see the abundant blossom in all its beauty—sure promise of the harvest to come.

The nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary established at the old Bar Convent at York, whose Sisters in London were personally acquainted with Father de la Colombière in 1678, claim to be the first publicly to have enshrined a picture of the Sacred Heart in their chapel. The Convent dates back to 1686, and is therefore the oldest Convent now existing in England. During all the eighteenth century, and indeed until 1828, there was no other place in York where the inhabitants could hear Mass. The Convent chapel under these circumstances was a public one, licensed even for weddings, and it was in this chapel that the picture of the Sacred Heart was venerated.

Father Lawson, S.J., a Yorkshireman and a friend of the nuns, was Rector of the Jesuit house at Bruges. He procured from Rome a picture of the Sacred Heart, painted on oak, and presented it to the Convent at York in October, 1767. From that day to this it remains one of the most cherished possessions of the Community. At first it was placed over the tabernacle on the High Altar, but afterwards, in 1869, it was removed to a side altar, which stands to-day in a transept known as the "Sacred Heart Chapel," and there for more than one hundred and fifty years nuns and children have carried their sorrows and their joys, their hopes and their fears, to the pitying Heart of Him Who said, "Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and you shall find rest to your souls" (Matt. xi. 28).

If Yorkshire claims to have first enshrined the picture of the Sacred Heart in England, to the Midlands belongs the privilege of first hearing public devotions recited in Its honour.

In 1814 the saintly Bishop Milner, Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District, visited Rome. Pope Pius VII. had lately returned from his captivity in France. The Bishop petitioned the Holy Father for certain privileges to be attached to a sodality of the Sacred Heart which he was anxious to organize in his diocese. On his return to England he established the sodality at Oscott—Old Oscott, or Maryvale as it is now called. Very soon he had a window painted with a representation of the Divine Heart for the College chapel, and beneath it an altar publicly dedicated to the Heart of Jesus. In this little chapel near Birmingham authorized prayers in honour of the Sacred Heart were first *publicly* recited, with the sanction and initiative of the Bishop. In a Pastoral Letter written in 1820 Bishop Milner called attention to the privileges he had obtained from the Pope for those who practised the devotion and joined the sodality. This seems to have been the first Pastoral Letter on devotion to the Sacred Heart from the pen of an English Bishop. It has, therefore, an interest all its own. "Moreover," writes Father Price in an interesting book called "The Sacred Heart in England," "it stands out as a prominent landmark in the history of the devotion in England, and for this

reason: it had clearly been the mind of Rome for over a century, that episcopal approbation was to be a necessary factor in establishing the devotion on a sound footing anywhere, whatever might be the practice of the faithful in private."

From this time English Catholic life began to revive in the land. In 1829 came the Catholic Emancipation, to be followed twenty-one years later by the Restoration of the Hierarchy in 1850, and the same year Nicholas Wiseman, the Archbishop of Westminster, was created Cardinal.

He both authorized and encouraged devotion to the Sacred Heart. Cardinal Merry del Val's mother tells us of an incident in which Cardinal Wiseman's love for the Heart of Jesus is portrayed. Madame Merry del Val and her brothers and sisters were frequent visitors at the Cardinal's house when they were children. "On one occasion," says Mr. Wilfrid Ward in his *Life of the Cardinal*, "he had given some verses to one of the children, and noticed the disappointment of her younger sister at receiving nothing. Wiseman did not forget it. An invitation to Walthamstow soon followed for the younger sister. An envelope was given her on her arrival; and she found in the Cardinal's writing some lines:

" ' If at our Saviour's feet to rest
Made Mary's choice the better part,
Ours surely then must be the best
To lean on Jesue' Sacred Heart.' "

Churches then began to spring up all over the country. Even in 1848 St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, had been built, and the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart was very soon established there. The Jesuits, of course, had a flourishing Confraternity at Farm Street, and about 1852 one was established at St. Mary's, Moorfields. In 1853 Father Dalgairns, of the London Oratory, did much to extend devotion to the Sacred Heart by his beautiful book on the subject, entitled "*The Heart of Jesus.*"

In 1866 the League of the Apostleship of Prayer was established in England, the first affiliation dating from May of that year. Now there is hardly a parish in the length and

breadth of the British Isles which has not joined that Holy League of Prayer of which Pope Leo XIII. wrote: "It is so beautiful, and unites such extreme fruitfulness with such simplicity as to merit assuredly all the encouragement which ecclesiastical authority can give." Its simplicity is proved by the following words taken from the preface of the handbook of the Apostleship: "It appeals to all Catholics, however little time they may have for devotion. The only burden laid upon those joining is to make, at their morning prayers, an offering of their prayers, works, sufferings, and joys of the day for the intentions of the Heart of Jesus. This is indulgenced, and may be made in any words, or even in thought only."

Perhaps the latest development in the worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the Social Reign of the Sacred Heart and the devotion known as the Enthronement. We referred to it on the first page of this book, and perhaps no more fitting epilogue could be found for the story of Father de la Colombière's life than an account of the sermon preached in Westminster on St. Margaret Mary's first feast, October 17th, 1920. The preacher, Father Matheo Crawley Boevey, has been called the "modern Father de la Colombière," and indeed one can imagine how the saintly Jesuit of the seventeenth century would endorse every word that fell from the lips of the preacher in the great Catholic Cathedral of the London of to-day. The preacher gave out two texts—"Thy kingdom come," and "Save us, we perish." Why was it, he said, that the whole world to-day was confronted with organized revolt, red ruin, and decay of nations, not only through war, but through that social wreckage which was worse than war? Why? Because in the months before the Armistice the one counsel wilfully dismissed by the nations was that of Jesus Christ, in the person of His Vicar on earth. No wonder the prospect is that of ruin! Men had attempted again to build the Tower of Babel, alienating the Divine Master, and what could follow but complete failure of their plans? They forgot that it is written for nations and parliaments, as for individuals and families: "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it."

But yet in the midst of this social apostasy Christ remains

the Cornerstone. "Catholics," cried the preacher, "lift up your eyes to this altar, and behold your Lord and Master! He says to you: 'Fear not! I have vanquished the world'; and if you will truly enthrone His Sacred Heart in your homes and march under His victorious banner, in this sign you shall conquer. Perhaps to-night you have come in such numbers expecting to hear a panegyric on St. Margaret Mary: the best one you can find is in the wonderful success of her mission. Our Lord said to her: 'I will reign, in spite of My enemies'; and it is by rebuilding the Christian family that we lay the Foundation Stone of His reign in human society.

"The worst catastrophe that ever befell England was the Royal Decree which banished God from her altars; but He still dwells in our tabernacles, and by this conquering crusade the Divine Master and England will one day meet again. Society as well as individuals must receive the Gospel. A famous man, a freethinker, who permitted me to enthrone the Sacred Heart in his home because his family wished it and to show his broad-mindedness, came to me, within a week, and throwing himself on his knees for confession, acknowledged that He Whom I had enthroned was the only Master, and that He had proved too strong for his pride and his philosophy! In these days of godless politics my bewildered eyes have seen at the same ceremony in Spain the King and Queen, the Queen-Mother and the highest nobles and officials of the land, and I heard Alfonso XIII. cry aloud, 'Jesus is the only Master of my realm.'

"That cannot be, you say, in Protestant England; but remember that it was from the Catacombs that Christianity burst forth on pagan Rome. From you, Catholics, if you are faithful to this crusade, may spring forth, even here in London, the unfaltering faith of Augustine, Apostle; of Edward, Confessor and King; of Thomas, Archbishop and Martyr; and then, through you and your families, radiating the truth, England, which has so defamed Catholicism, will return to her early allegiance" (*Universe*, October 22nd, 1920).

Yes, surely in Westminster Cathedral that day the seed sown by Father de la Colombière broke forth into blossom.

May he pray for England still, and may we, who owe so much to him for bringing us the message of love, beseech the Sacred Heart that His faithful servant may soon be raised to the altars of the Church, so that, invoked by the Christian world, his intercession may avail to extend the reign of the Sacred Heart, and thus he will continue down the centuries the mission given him by Christ Himself:

“Tell him from Me to do all he can to establish this devotion, and thus to console My Heart.”

APPENDIX

SPIRITUAL RETREAT OF THE VENERABLE FATHER CLAUDE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE,*

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

*In which are noted down the Graces and Particular
Lights which God imparted to him during his
Spiritual Exercises of Thirty Days.*

FIRST WEEK.

I HAVE begun, it seems to me, with a will determined by God's grace, to follow all the movements of the Holy Ghost, and without any attachment which would make me fear to belong unreservedly to God. Resolved to suffer for God all the aridity and inward desolation which may come to me, and which I have deserved only too well for the abuse which I have made of the lights and consolations which I formerly received: (1) I intend to go through these Exercises as if they were to be my last, and as if I was to die immediately thereafter. (2) To be exceedingly faithful and sincere therein, and on this point to conquer pride, which has a strong repugnance to reveal itself. (3) Not to rely at all upon myself, nor upon my carefulness; for this reason I resolved not to read any uncommon spiritual books, even if I should feel a strong passion for certain which treat the spiritual life in an exalted manner, such as *Saint Teresa*, *The Interior Christian*, etc. I thought that God would cause me to find in the points which the spiritual Father will mark out for me, and in the books which he will give to me, whatever He intends me to find and to feel in this retreat. I find this detachment very beneficial, and I thank God for having inspired me to make this sacrifice to Him, which was the greatest that I could make upon this occasion.

I experienced great confusion in that God having done me the

* Reprinted from the Quarterly Series "Lights in Prayer," by the kind permission of Fr. J. Keating, S.J.

honour to destine me to love Him, I have spent such a considerable part of my life, not only without loving Him, but in offending Him; I have admired with great sweetness of feeling the infinite patience and mercy of God, Who, seeing how I despised this glorious end, and that consequently I was useless to Him in the world, and hurtful to His interests, did not cease to bear with me, to wait for me to consider why I was there, and to cause me to remember it from time to time. I felt no difficulty in promising for the future to live only to serve Him, and to glorify Him.

All offices, all places, all the various states of the body, healthy, sick, impotent, living, dead, are, by God's grace, very indifferent to me. I seem even to envy those whom blindness, or some other habitual infirmity, separates from all intercourse with the world, obliging them to live as if they were already dead. I do not know if it is the prospect of the combats which I shall have to engage in during the rest of my life which causes me to find a charm in that kind of state in which I should perhaps live in greater repose, and in a detachment which would cost me far less. When one wishes to belong to God at any cost, it is easy to understand how one desires the strangest means, when they appear the surest. In the ardent desire which God gives me never to love anything but Him, and to keep my heart free from any attachment to creatures, a perpetual prison into which calumny should have thrown me would seem to me a matchless fortune, and I think that with the help of Heaven I should never be weary of it.

I have not found myself very eager to labour for the salvation of others. When I was considering the second of our Rules, it appeared to me that I had more zeal formerly. I do not know if I deceive myself; but I think that what makes me slack concerning this is only the fear that in employments into which zeal enters, I should seek myself, for it seems to me that in all of them nature flatters itself, especially when one succeeds, as one should hope to do, for the glory of God. It requires great grace and great strength to resist the charm which is found in changing hearts, and in the trust which those whom one has touched place in one.

Sin must be very dreadful, since it obliged God to damn creatures so perfect and so lovable as the Angels. How great therefore is Thy mercy, O my God, in bearing with me after so many sins, I who am only a little clay; in calling me back to Thee, in not wishing to lose me ! How great Thy love must be, to counterbalance, to conquer the rightful aversion which Thou hast naturally for sin ! This thought touches me to the heart, and fills me with tender love to God.

To the confusion caused me by the sight of my inordinations, succeeded the sweet thought, that there was much matter for the exercise of God's mercy, and a most firm hope that He would glorify Himself by forgiving me. *Reposita est hæc spes in sinu meo.* This hope is so firmly established in my heart, that it seems that by God's grace I should sooner lose my life than be deprived of it. Then I threw myself into the arms of the Blessed Virgin, and she seemed to receive me with wonderful readiness and gentleness, which touched me the more, because I am conscious of having served her badly hitherto. But I have come here with a steadfast purpose to omit nothing this year which is calculated to produce great love for her, and to mark out for myself a plan of devotion towards her, which I shall try to keep to all my life. I feel much comforted by the thought that I shall have leisure to work at that, and that I shall succeed in it with the aid of the Blessed Virgin herself. Our Lady, having thus received me readily, seemed to present me to her Son, Who out of consideration for her, looked at me, and opened to me His heart, as if I had been the most innocent of men.

Before making the meditation on Death, I had a conversation which caused me some uneasiness, owing, on the one hand, to the fear that I had gratified my vanity therein, and, on the other, by the apprehension that what I had said would cause me confusion. Having gone to the oratory filled with these thoughts, I combated them for nearly half an hour before I could regain the calmness of which they had deprived me; but at last, having all at once turned to the mercy of God for the fault which I had committed, and having accepted all the shame which it might bring upon me, and having even resolved

to forestall it and seek it, in a moment there was a great calm in my heart that I seemed again to have found God, Whom I was seeking, which caused me a moment of the sweetest joy which I had ever felt in my life. Since that time I have remained strongly fortified against human respect and the judgment of men, and to conquer the repugnance which I had experienced in disclosing my failings.

Then thinking of the state to which death reduced us in regard to all created things, I thought that this would trouble me a little, not feeling an attachment to anything. I therefore asked myself this question: Since it would not grieve me to die now, and consequently to be deprived for ever of all that brings pleasure or honour in this life, why not resolve to live henceforth as if I were dead? I answered myself that I should have no difficulty, in actually separating myself from all things so as to spend the rest of my days in a tomb, or in a prison, with all possible uncomfot and infamy. But I foresaw that it will be very different, and will cost me many a combat, if I wish to live with complete detachment of affection in the midst of the world, where our employments keep us; however, I have resolved to do so with God's grace, which can alone work this miracle in me.

Lastly, thinking of what causes trouble at death, namely, past sins and future sufferings, a resolution presented itself at once to my mind, which I embraced with my whole heart, and with much consolation of soul. It was that in that last moment I will make of all the sins known or unknown which shall present themselves to my mind, a lump which I will throw at the feet of Our Saviour, to be consumed by the fire of His mercy; the greater the number and the more heinous they shall appear to me to be, the more willingly I will offer them to Him to be consumed, because what I ask will be so much the more deserving of His mercy. I cannot then do anything more reasonable nor more glorious to God, and with the idea which I have conceived of His goodness I shall have no difficulty in resolving to do so, because I feel wholly inclined thereto. As to purgatory (for I should wrong the mercy of God by the least fear of hell, even though I had deserved it more

than all the devils), I do not fear it; I should wish not to have deserved it, for by so doing I have displeased God, but since I have done so, I am delighted to go and satisfy His justice in the severest manner which can be imagined, even to the day of Judgment. I am aware that the torments there are horrible, but I know that they honour God and cannot injure souls, that I shall be safe from ever opposing the will of God, that I shall not think unkindly of His rigour, that I shall even love His severity, and wait patiently until it be completely satisfied. So I have willingly given all my satisfactions to the souls in purgatory, and even ceded to others all the suffrages which shall be given to me after my death, in order that God may be glorified in Paradise by souls which have merited to be elevated there to higher glory than myself.

I have also been firmly convinced in this first week that men cannot satisfy the justice of God for the least fault. This caused me joy: First, because this relieves me from the constant anxiety as to whether I have done enough for my sins, since I should always be saying to myself: "No, you have not done enough; as to the guilt, that is not in our power, it needs the Blood of God to efface that; as to the penalty, it needs either eternity or the sufferings of Jesus Christ; but this Blood and these sufferings are in our hands." Secondly, we must not neglect to expiate the disorder of our life by penance; but without disquiet, for the worst that can happen when our will is good and we are under obedience, is to remain a long time in purgatory, and it may be said in a good sense, that that is not such a great evil. Moreover, I prefer to owe my forgiveness to God's mercy rather than to my diligence, because it is more to His glory and renders Him more lovable to me. I derive much benefit from having had my penance regulated for me. This preserved me from vanity, or indiscretion, or the uneasiness which the fear of self-love would have produced. I should most certainly have fallen into one of these snares, and perhaps into all three.

At the last Judgment it will cause deep shame to vain persons, who have placed all their happiness in being honoured and esteemed by men, and who have sought every kind of distinc-

tion, to see themselves mingled with the vilest rabble, and thoroughly despised by those who esteemed them most in life. On the other hand, what a joy for humble souls, who for the love of God have led an obscure and ordinary life, to see themselves singled out and separated from the multitude, to be placed in the full daylight without any further fear of their virtue.

I find that of all times that of dryness and desolation is best suited for meriting. A soul which is seeking God only, endures this state without difficulty, and easily rises above what passes in the imagination and in the inferior part of the soul, in which are the greater number of consolations. It ceases not to love God, to humble itself, and to accept this state, even for ever. There is nothing so suspicious as sweetness, and nothing more dangerous. We sometimes attach ourselves to it, and after it is gone, we experience no fervour for good, quite the reverse. But for me it is a solid consolation to think, in the midst of aridity, and even of temptations, that my heart is free, and that it is only by this heart that I can merit or demerit, that I neither please nor displease God by things which are not in my power, such as sensible likings, and troublesome thoughts which present themselves to the mind in spite of oneself. So, in such a state, I say to God: "My God, let the world, or the devil even, have that in me which I cannot take from him, that of which I am not master. As for my heart, which Thou hast been pleased to place in my hands, they shall never have any part of it. It is Thine, as Thou knowest and seest; Thou canst take it, it depends only on Thee, and Thou wilt do so when it shall please Thee." A man to whom God has given a real wish to serve Him should be troubled at nothing. *Pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.* This makes me hope, with God's grace, to make acts of true contrition, because I perceive the interested motives which may lead to sorrow for our sins; and with a hearty will and complete deliberation, I renounce all such motives. I am persuaded that God is infinitely kind, that He alone deserves to be considered, and that it is right that we should sacrifice to Him all our interests in order to think only of His glory. Now this is possible, or it is not: if it were impossible, God would not advise it, nor order me to do it;

if it be possible, with His grace I am doing it, for I do and wish sincerely and in good faith to do, all that I can.

I think that I have never been so consoled as in the meditation on the Blessed Sacrament, which is the last of the first week. From the first moment that I was in the oratory, and considered this mystery, I felt quite penetrated with a sweet impulse of admiration and gratitude for the goodness which God has shown us in this mystery. I have indeed received therein such great grace, and have experienced so sensibly the effects of this bread of Angels, that I am unable to think of it without being touched with the deepest gratitude. I never conceived such great trust that I should persevere in good and in the desire which I have to belong entirely to God, notwithstanding the frightful difficulties which I imagine during the rest of my life. I will say Mass every day; there is my hope, my sole resource: Jesus Christ can do but little, if He cannot sustain me from day to day. He will not fail to reproach me with my laxity directly I begin to give myself up to it, He will give me each day new counsels, new strength, He will teach me, encourage me, and will grant me, or obtain for me by His sacrifice, all the graces that I shall ask of Him.

If I do not see that He is present I feel it. I am like the blind who threw themselves at His feet, and did not doubt that they touched Him, though they saw Him not. This meditation has greatly increased my faith in this mystery.

I have been deeply touched in considering both the thoughts which Jesus Christ may have of me whilst I hold Him in my hands, and those which He has for me, that is, the disposition of His heart, His wishes, His designs, etc. What sweetness, what graces a most pure and detached soul would receive in this Sacrament !

On the morning of the seventh day, I was attacked by thoughts of distrust concerning the plan of life which I am making for the future; I see great difficulties in it. It seems as if it would be easy to spend any other kind of life holily; and the more austere, solitary, and obscure it might be, and separated from all intercourse, the more pleasing it would appear to me to be. As to what usually terrifies nature, such as prisons, constant

sickness and even death, all this seems easy compared with this everlasting war with self, this vigilance against the attacks of the world and of self-love, this living death in the midst of the world. When I think of this, I foresee that life will seem to be of prodigious length, and that death will never come soon enough. I understood these words of St. Augustine: *Patienter vivit, et delectabiliter moritur*—"He lives with patience and dies with pleasure." I understood besides that life which Jesus Christ chose is assuredly the most perfect, and that it is impossible to give a higher idea of holiness than that of a perfect Jesuit. This is producing a good result, which is to convince me thoroughly that if I have hitherto practised some detachment, though very imperfect, I was far from doing so of myself, and for the future God must take the work in hand if He wishes to make anything good of me; for I feel deeply how incapable I am of doing anything without His grace.

I observe that it requires many steps to arrive at holiness, and that each step we make we imagine to be a great advance, whilst after we have made it we find that it is nothing, and that we have yet to begin. A man who is about to leave the world regards this action as one after which there will remain nothing more to do; but when he has entered upon religious life with all his passions, he finds that he was mistaken in his reckoning, that he has simply made a change of objects, and that he is worldly, though out of the world. There is then a further step to be made, which is to detach himself from those objects from which his state does not entirely detach him, to withdraw even his heart from the world, and to have no love for anything created. This is very different from leaving the world and becoming a religious. When that is done, there is still another step to make, namely, to become detached from oneself, to seek God alone even in God, not merely to seek no temporal interest in holiness, which would be gross imperfection, but not to seek even our spiritual interest therein, to seek simply the interests of God. My God, to attain to this Thou must work powerfully in me; for how could a creature of itself reach this degree of purity? *Quis potest facere mundum de immundo conceptum semine?* Nonne tu qui solus es?

A thought which consoles me greatly, and which is able, with God's grace, to allay part of my uneasiness, is, that in order to know if one is humanly attached to things imposed by obedience, if one displeases God by taking, for instance, the necessities of life, by the enjoyment of a high reputation, by the glory resulting from our labours, or by the pleasure which there is in maintaining it holily, etc.: to know, I say, whether self-love has crept into these things, we must not judge by feeling, because in the ordinary course it is as impossible not to feel the pleasure which such things bring with them as it is not to feel fire when applied to what is sensitive. Yet we must examine: (1) Whether we have sought in any way the pleasure which we experience. (2) Whether the loss of it would grieve us. (3) Whether if it were equally to God's glory, and we were free to choose, we should rather choose what is disagreeable and obscure. When one is in this disposition one should labour with great freedom and courage for God, and despise all the doubts and scruples which might hinder or trouble us.

SECOND WEEK.

In the first meditation I was troubled by recollections of a weakness to which I had given way on the preceding day. But, having discovered the reason why God had permitted the faults which I had committed, namely, to cure me of the vain esteem which I was beginning to conceive of myself, the sight produced sensible joy and tranquillity, I perceived with pleasure, which was certainly not natural, that I was not such as I imagined, and I do not remember having ever discovered any truth with such satisfaction as that with which I recognized my worthlessness upon this occasion.

The Incarnation: Here I find only annihilation and humility. The Angel bows before a maiden; Mary takes the position of a servant; the Word becomes a captive; and Jesus Christ, conceived in the womb of His Mother, annihilates Himself before God in the most real and profound way that can possibly be imagined. My God, what a beautiful spectacle for Thee

to behold persons so excellent humble themselves before Thee in so perfect a manner, at the time when Thou art honouring them with Thy choicest favours ! I had much pleasure in considering the inward feelings of these holy persons, but especially the deep abasement by which Jesus Christ began to glorify His Father, and to repair the wrong done to His Majesty by the pride of mankind. For my part I am unable to humble myself at this sight, for where can I place myself, since I find Jesus Christ even in nothingness ? This may well bring down my pride: the Son of God annihilated before His Father ! I never understood till now that saying of St. Bernard: "What insolence for a worm to swell with pride, when the only-begotten Son of the Father humbles and annihilates Himself."

The Circumcision: I understood that the life of an Apostle requires great mortification: (1) Without it, God does not communicate Himself. (2) It is not possible to edify others. A man who refrains from pleasures, and who labours incessantly to repress his passions, speaks with much more authority and makes a much deeper impression. As I am naturally fond of pleasure, I have resolved to watch this evil inclination.

The Flight into Egypt: According to human prudence, this was hard and contrary to all reason. What can they do amongst a strange and idolatrous people ? But it is God's will, so it must be expedient: to reason upon obedience, however extravagant it may appear, is to distrust God's prudence, and to think that in spite of His wisdom He gives orders which can bring neither glory to Him nor profit to ourselves. As to commands in which human reason sees nothing, a man of faith ought to rejoice at the thought that it is God alone Who is acting and Who is preparing all the more benefits for us as He will have to send them to us in hidden ways which we cannot foresee. For my part, I have not, thank God, any difficulty in this, for I have learnt it by experience.

The Presentation: What an offering is here made on the part of Jesus, and of Mary ! What honour is rendered to God upon this occasion ! I offer the same offering at Mass: if I could but do so with the same feelings, and the same desire to please God ! I take pleasure in considering, in the canticle

of Simeon, the clear prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles: *Salutare tuum, quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum; lumen ad revelationem gentium*—"Thy salvation, that Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles." This holy man was very enlightened, and must have been exceedingly holy to have merited such signal favours. There are few true saints; yet there are some, and there have been in all ages.

I was omitting the Nativity, in which I remember that I besought God with great ardour, for about half an hour, to give me that perfect detachment of which Jesus sets us an example; I asked this through the intercession of St. Joseph, of the Blessed Virgin, and through Jesus Christ Himself. Amongst my devotions to the Blessed Virgin, I have determined never to ask anything of God in any prayer without employing the intercession of Mary.

Quid est quod me quærebatis, etc.—"Why did you seek Me?" In this meditation I was deeply touched by the sorrow which the Blessed Virgin felt during the three days that she was deprived of the presence of her Son, but still more by her tranquillity of heart, which was not disturbed, and which showed itself in seeking Jesus, and in acts of the most submissive and most heroic resignation. In his *quæ Patris mei sunt oportet me esse*—"I must be engaged in My Father's work"—I found important lessons for myself in these words. If the whole world were to rise against me, ridicule me, complain of me, and blame me, still I must do whatever God commands me, whatever He inspires me with for His greater glory. I have promised this, and I hope with God's grace to do so. This requires great watchfulness, without which one is easily surprised by human respect, especially when one is weak as I am.

Et erat subditus illis, crescebat ætate et sapientia—"He was subject to them; He increased in age and wisdom." I have reflected that instead of growing in virtues as we advance in age, we often decrease, especially in simplicity and fervour with regard to outward humiliations and dependence as to our spiritual guidance. I was moved at recognizing that in proportion as the number of God's benefits increases, our love

and gratitude grow cold. Why should we part with the virtues of novices? I admit that they do not suffice, and that many others must be added to them, but there is a wide difference between acquiring new virtues and getting rid of old ones; the early ones should be strengthened, not renounced.

Secondly, this love of solitude seemed to me very conformable to the mind of God. The spirit of the world makes us hasten and seek to shine, persuading us that we can never do this soon enough. The spirit of God has very different movements: thirty years of obscurity, unknown, notwithstanding all the specious pretexts which the glory of God might have afforded to a less enlightened zeal. I will remain in solitude as long as obedience will allow. No visit of mere civility, especially to women, no particular intimacy with any layman, at least I will seek for none, and will do nothing to maintain it, unless it be evident that God's glory requires me to act otherwise. This is one of my resolutions.

Thirdly, this inner life of Jesus Christ, which brings into such strong relief the lowliness of His actions, seems to reveal to me the real path to holiness. In the sort of life which I have embraced, this is the only way to distinguish oneself with God, because the whole exterior life is common. I am also extremely disposed towards it, to apply myself henceforth to do the smallest things with the highest intentions, to practise frequently, in my innermost heart, acts of the most perfect virtues of annihilation before God, of desire to promote His glory, of trust, of love, of resignation, and of complete sacrifice. This may be done everywhere, even when unemployed.

Though all that we can do to promote God's glory is very little, and even this exterior glory is a very small thing with Him, yet it is not so small but that the Eternal Word became incarnate for it. How wonderful it is that, though able Himself to convert the whole world, He preferred to do so through His disciples; He employed His life in training them; it seems as if, out of all that was necessary for the conversion of the world, He only took for Himself what was thorny, such as death, and left the brilliant things to men. How great was His love

for those few men, to wish to use them to sanctify others, though He could easily have done this without them !

The Baptism: I understood that a man who is called to convert others has need of great virtues, above all of deep humility and wonderful obedience. There are occasions on which we can imitate this conduct, and we ought not to let them slip. To dispose things in such a way that one appears to follow advice when one gives it, and to seem to be only the instrument when one is really the workman, this facilitates the execution of things and tends to humility. I have no difficulty in attributing everything to God; how could I of myself accomplish anything for the sanctification of others, when I see how incapable I am of curing myself of the slightest imperfections, though I am aware of them, and though I have many weapons in my hands to conquer them ?

I have resolved to be obedient all my life, like a child, above all in things which in any way concern the advancement of God's service; because without this, there is danger of self-seeking. What a delusion it is to think of serving God and glorifying Him, more or differently from what He pleases ! If you were the chief person in the world, what difficulty would there be in obeying a man in everything ? This is being a man of God; you may well obey a bell.

Moreover, to honour those who are labouring for the salvation of souls, to further their ministry as much as possible, to maintain perfect union with them, and to rejoice at their success. An opposite line of conduct is the most absurd, faulty, vain, and far from the spirit of God, that a man who is working for the salvation of souls could pursue.

In the Desert: Thirty years of preparation would have seemed to suffice; but no, Jesus Christ has no sooner His mission from His Father than the Holy Spirit leads Him into the desert to practise there the mortification and the other virtues necessary for the office of an Apostle. I propose to avoid all daintiness in eating, clothes, etc.; never to ask for special food when preaching, and never to complain of anything. *Non in solo pane vivit homo*—"Not in bread alone doth man live." Secondly, never to have anything special for clothes, even

for the country, and to perform all my journeys, as far as possible, on foot. It is easy to do this without great inconvenience, and, besides other good effects, it humbles the spirit.

I have also resolved to make my spiritual exercises and all my retreats with inviolable fidelity, and with the greatest fervour that I can; to meditate much upon the life of Jesus Christ, which is the pattern for ours.

I understood the saying of Berchmans: *Mortificatio maxima vita communis*—"Common life is a very great mortification," for it mortifies body and mind. All else is often the result of vanity, which seeks distinction. In any case, before doing what is extraordinary, I should wish to do all that is ordinary, and to do it under all the circumstances required by the Rules: this includes much, and leads to admirable holiness. In reading our Rules, I conceived a strong desire to keep them all by the grace of God. This requires, in my opinion, great courage, great simplicity, great recollection, great strength and great constancy, and above all, great grace from God.

Jesus Christ chose for His first Apostles men who were poor, dull of comprehension, and, humanly speaking, little suited to His purpose. Not that a person must be of low birth and illiterate in order to labour for the salvation of souls, but to impress upon all who are called to do so how little necessary their talents, natural or acquired, are, and that these are not the cause of the success they may have in their work. He also chose fishermen, etc., to show us that it is not work for the fastidious: but that many fatigues must be endured, and we must be prepared for the roughest labours. Thank God, I feel ready for this, and no kind of work alarms me; I should willingly die labouring therein; but I feel so unworthy of this favour that I know not whether God will use me for anything whatever.

Beati pauperes spiritu, mites, mundo corde—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the clean of heart." These three Beatitudes seem to have some connection and cannot be the one without the other. I quite understood that those are truly happy who are detached from all things, and who have plucked from their heart even its vicious inclinations; but I

am certainly far from this state. I feel, at the close of this second week, that the tendency to vainglory is almost as strong in my heart as ever, although it does not produce the same results, and with the help of grace I repress its movements. I seem never to have known myself so thoroughly; but I recognize my wretchedness so deeply that I am ashamed of myself, and this sight causes me such fits of sadness from time to time, that I should fall into despair unless God sustained me. In this state nothing consoles me so much as the reflection that this very sadness is a consequence of great vanity, that this knowledge and realization of my wretchedness is a great grace from God, and that, provided I hope in Him, and am faithful to Him in combating nature, He will not allow me to perish. I submit myself to His will in all things, and am ready, if He wills, to spend my life in this troublesome struggle, provided He prevents me by His grace from yielding. Nevertheless, I think that one stifles this appetite for vainglory by dint of repressing its movements. A person succeeds in the end in thoroughly stifling remorse of conscience, though there are grace, nature, and education to be combated.

In the meditation upon the Three Degrees of Humility, besides feeling much sweetness, confusion, and fear that God calls me to the third, which consists in cutting off all evil inclinations, and loving all that the world hates; besides seeing that I should be the most miserable of men if I were to content myself with anything less, many reasons convince me that I must aim at it with all my might. First, God has loved me too well for me to spare myself henceforth with regard to Him: the mere thought of doing so horrifies me. What, not belong wholly to God after His mercy to me, or reserve something for myself after all that I have received from Him? Never will my heart consent to act thus. Secondly, when I see of how little account I am, and what it is that I can do for God's glory by employing myself entirely in His service, I am ashamed at the mere thought of depriving Him of anything. Thirdly, there would be no safety for me in any medium; I know myself, and I should soon fall into a bad extreme. Fourthly, only those who have given themselves to God unreservedly can expect

to die calmly. Fifthly, they alone lead a peaceful and tranquil life. Sixthly, in order to perform much for God one must be completely His. However little you keep back, you will be unfit to do great things for others. Seventhly, in this state one maintains a lively faith and firm hope, one asks God confidently, and one obtains infallibly.

In the meditation upon the Three States or Three Classes, I have resolved, and seemingly in good faith, thanks be to God, to be one of those who desire to be healed at any cost, and as I have recognized that my ruling passion is the desire for vain-glory, I have firmly resolved to omit no humiliation of all those which I can procure without offending against the Rule, and not to avoid those that present themselves. I have remarked that this continual care to humble and mortify self in everything sometimes makes nature sad, which renders it cowardly and little inclined to serve God. This is a temptation which can be conquered, I think, by supposing that God exacts this from us only from friendship. Let us apply ourselves to this exercise as a good friend endeavours on all occasions to please his friend, or a good son to serve and give pleasure to his good father, without there being any need for constraint, retaining a certain liberty of spirit amidst the smallest and most assiduous attentions, which liberty is one of the most sensible signs of true love. We do with pleasure what we believe will be agreeable to the person we really love.

In the repetition of the two previous meditations I was first deeply impressed by the thought of the pride contained in a deliberate sin, and of the blindness of those who deliberate as to whether they should content themselves with avoiding mortal sin, etc., as if a greater good ought not to be unhesitatingly preferred to a smaller one; this feeling was crushed by a thought of vain complacency which occurred to me, and which I had to resist. I cannot describe how much this humbled me. I spent the remainder of the meditation in the thought of my nothingness, and of my unworthiness to receive any graces or consolations. I accepted with entire submission the privation of these blessings for my whole life, and to be until death the sport and laughing-stock of the devils, and to suffer every kind

of temptation. I seemed to acknowledge, with the Canaanitish woman, that to me belonged no part of the children's bread. I asked God only for what is strictly necessary to sustain me, so that I may not offend Him. Yet I do not despair of attaining to the degree of holiness which my vocation requires; but I see that it will take a long time to do so. Well, thank God, I have resolved upon a long perseverance; holiness is so great and precious a thing that it cannot be bought too dearly.

It was then that, feeling strongly urged to fulfil the plan of life which I had been contemplating for three or four years, and with the consent of my director, I gave myself to Thee in earnest, O my God! How great are Thy mercies towards me, God of Majesty! Who am I that Thou shouldst accept the sacrifice of my heart? It shall be Thine alone, and creatures shall no longer have any part in it, for indeed they are not worth it. Be then, kind Jesus, my Father, my Friend, my Master, my All, since Thou art satisfied to have my heart: would it not indeed be unreasonable if it were not satisfied with Thine? I wish henceforth to live for Thee only, and to live long, if it be Thy good pleasure, in order to suffer more. I do not ask for death, which would shorten my sufferings. It is not Thy will that I should die at the same age as Thyself. Thy will be done; but at least it seems only just that I should begin to live to Thee and for Thee at the age that Thou didst die for all men, and for me in particular, who have so often rendered myself unworthy of this great favour. Receive, then, sweet Saviour of mankind, this sacrifice which the most ungrateful of men makes to Thee, to repair the injury which he has unceasingly done Thee hitherto by offending Thee.*

In the meditation upon the Mission of the Apostles, I begin, I think, to know my vocation and the spirit of the Society, and by God's grace I also begin to see that this spirit is growing within me, whether on account of the special affection and high esteem which I feel for all Rules or because my zeal is becoming greater and more pure.

In the words which contain the mission of the Apostles:

* Here Father de la Colombière made his famous Vow, the text of which has been given in Chapter VII.

Docete omnes—"Go and teach all"—I understood that we are sent to all kinds of persons, and that wherever a Jesuit is found, in whatever company he may be, he is there as sent by God to treat of the business of salvation with those he meets with, and that if he does not speak of this nor profit by every opportunity to advance it, he betrays his ministry, and renders himself unworthy of the name he bears. I have therefore resolved to remember this under all circumstances, and to study to turn the conversation upon things which may edify those whom I meet, so that no one may part from me without having greater knowledge of God than when he came, and the greater wish, if possible, for his salvation.

In meditating upon Zeal, the disinterestedness and indifference which one should have occupied me the whole time. I thank God that I found in me no repugnance to employ myself in the instruction of children and of the poor; on the contrary, I think I should joyfully undertake these works; they do not encourage vanity, and are generally more fruitful. After all, the soul of a poor man is as dear to Jesus Christ as that of a king, and it matters little with whom Paradise is filled. This is one of the principal signs which Jesus Christ gives of His mission: *Pauperes evangelizantur*—"To the poor the Gospel is preached," and by this mark it may be known that the spirit of God founded the Society; for catechizing, together with the care of the poor, is one of the principal duties. The Constitutions recommend nothing more strongly to us than this. I think that one has reason to hope that one is sent by God, and that it is He that one seeks, when one has this indifference; therefore I have resolved, whether in hearing confession, or in preaching, to love to serve the poor, and if it be in my choice, to prefer them to the rich; the latter will have no lack of people to serve them.

In the meditation upon Apostolic Poverty, I have resolved that this virtue shall be an honour and pleasure to me all my life, that I may have the consolation of always being able to say, "I have nothing," whereas the world and self-love find so much satisfaction in having and reckoning up what they possess especially no books: this will oblige me to read well and dili-

gently those that I consider most necessary; as to the rest, it will cost me little to do without them.

In meditating on Mortification I understood that an apostle is not called to an easy life or repose: he must toil and fear neither heat nor cold, fasting nor watching; his life and his strength must be devoted to this work. The worst that can happen to him is to die in serving God and his neighbour; and I do not see that this need terrify anyone. Health and life are indifferent to me, but sickness or death, when they come upon me through my labour for the salvation of souls, will be very agreeable and precious to me.

The same day, after dinner, having read in the *Life of Berchmans* the death of that holy young man, I was deeply touched by the words he then said, that he had great consolation in never having broken any Rule. Reflecting what I could say on the subject if I had to render an account to God, I at once felt such great sorrow at having kept my Rules so badly that I wept abundantly. I then made my prayer in which I formed great resolutions to be a better Jesuit than I had been hitherto. I invoked this blessed youth with great confidence, and I prayed to him through the Blessed Virgin, whom he loved so well, and by the Society to which he was so faithful, to obtain for me grace to live until death, as he had done during five years. For the remainder of the day I was penetrated with sorrow, having continually before my eyes my Rules, so frequently despised and broken; I wept over it three or four times, and I think by God's grace it will not be easy to lead me to break them in future. Still I am inconsolable about the past; I never comprehend the evil which I did in this. I thought that if in the hour of death Berchmans had been asked to break a Rule, no consideration whatever would have induced him to commit this fault after having passed his life without failing in anything. Now we have as much reason to resist all temptations of this kind. In breaking silence to-day I should not offend God less, I should despise an order inspired by the Holy Ghost to our Holy Founder, and it will be no thanks to me if regularity is not destroyed; this Rule is not such a slight thing but that the welfare of the whole body depends upon it.

As to Contempt of the World, I think that the practice of the presence of God is very efficacious. It is a thought of St. Basil that a man who has a king and a lackey for witnesses of what he does thinks not of the lackey but only of gaining the approbation of the prince. It is a strange and unhappy servitude to seek to please men. When shall I be able to say: *Mihi mundus crucifixus est et ego mundo*—"The world is crucified to me and I to the world"? I have entreated Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin to grant me this disposition.

In the meditation upon Humility, I do indeed understand that it should be great in an apostolical man, and I think that the fear of not having enough will be a dread to me for life. Yet, I think that in this one need only be watchful and avoid carelessness. It is not easy for a person who reflects upon what he is, and what he has been, and what he can accomplish by himself, to attribute anything to himself; in order to crush self-love, he has only to remember that the first sign of virtue is not to esteem oneself. Secondly, I need only look at Jesus Christ annihilated in all reality, and Who acknowledges before God that He is nothing, and that in all He does the glory is due solely to His Father. People praise me, they are mistaken, and it is an injustice done to God. It is like praising an actor for the verses, written by another, which he recites. Besides, others do not esteem us so highly as we imagine; they are acquainted with our faults, even those of which we ourselves are not aware; or perhaps they do not think of us at all. Still, I do wish to do great things, or, to speak more correctly, that God should perform great things through me. It is a subject for praise and admiration that God makes such good use of such bad instruments; but I am none the better for that, and it may happen that God will condemn me after having saved many through me, just as the painter throws a piece of charcoal into the fire after having used it to trace an admirable design and most excellent figures. The behaviour of the Blessed Virgin is admirable; she frankly admits that God has done great things in her, and it will win for her the praises of all ages, but, instead of being puffed up thereat, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*—"My soul doth magnify the Lord."

At the repetition of this meditation, after having acknowledged before God that I am nothing, and of myself have never done anything, I understand how just it is that God alone should be glorified, and it seemed to me that a man who is praised for some virtue or good deed ought to be as much ashamed as an honourable man would be at seeing himself taken for another, and praised for what he had not done. If we are vain enough to be proud of these qualities, whether natural or supernatural, which are not really ours, how great will be our shame when at the Judgment Day God will bring forward this vain man, and, displaying before the whole world what he had received and what he had of himself, will reproach him with his vanity, saying: *Quid habes quod non accepisti? Si autem accepisti quid gloriaris?*—"What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast?" I seem to see a rogue, who, having passed for some time for an honest man by reason of a stolen cloak, has been discovered when in good company, and put to great confusion. But it will be much worse, my God, when Thou shalt show that I not only possessed nothing about which to glory, but I had not even that of which I had gloried, when Thou shalt lay bare my hypocrisy, the abuse that I have made of Thy graces, my inward wretchedness, etc. God then showed me to myself so deformed, so wretched, so devoid of all merit and all virtue, that I had never before been so disagreeable in my own eyes. I seemed to hear Him in my innermost heart going through all the virtues and showing me clearly that I possessed none of them. I entreated Him that I might always retain this light. I admit that this self-knowledge which is daily increasing greatly weakens, or at least moderates, a certain firm trust which I have long had in God's mercy. I dare no longer raise my eyes to heaven, and I feel so unworthy of God's graces that I scarcely know whether I have not barred all entrance to them. This feeling arises principally from the comparison which I make of my life, and sins, and pride, with the innocence and humility of Saints.

After the preceding meditation I found that upon Distrust of Self quite easy. When one knows what it is to save a soul, one is quickly convinced that one counts for nothing in it.

What folly to think that we can accomplish by a few words said in passing, what cost Jesus Christ so dearly! You speak, and a soul is converted; it is like the puppet-show: the servant tells the puppet to dance, and the master moves it by a spring. The order has no part in it. *Exi a me, quia homo peccator sum, Domine*—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." This is the deep feeling in a soul, in which, or by which, God works something extraordinary.

In the meditation upon Prayer, as I feel through God's mercy a considerable attraction towards prayer, I earnestly besought God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, to grant me grace to love this exercise more and more until death. It is the sole means of purifying us, uniting us with God, and causing God to unite Himself with us to perform something for His glory. We must pray in order to obtain apostolic virtues, we must pray in order that they may be useful to others, and we must pray so that we may not lose them in serving our neighbour. This counsel, or command, "Pray without ceasing," seems to me very sweet and by no means impossible. It includes the practice of the presence of God. I will, with God's help, endeavour to follow it. We always need God, therefore we must pray to Him always, and the more we pray the better we please Him, and the more we obtain. I do not ask for that sweetness which God bestows as He thinks good, in prayer; I am not worthy of it, and I have not strength to bear it. Extraordinary graces are not good for me. It would be building upon sand to give them to me, or like pouring precious liquor into a vessel with holes, which can retain nothing. I ask of God prayer which is solid, simple, which glorifies Him, and does not make me proud. Aridity and desolation, accompanied by God's grace, are, I think, very useful to me; I then make acts of the most excellent virtues with pleasure; I struggle against an evil disposition, and I try to be faithful to God, etc.

As to Conformity with the Will of God: From the commencement of the meditation I felt disposed to make acts of it. I did so without difficulty, because, by God's grace, I really feel none concerning any state, and I think that by that same grace

I should accept with submission the most vexatious events which Providence should allow to happen to me, or at least I should speedily bring myself to do so, if God should not forsake me. I am, above all, resigned to sanctify myself in the way which pleases God, by withdrawal of all sensible sweetness, if He so wills, by interior sufferings, and by continual combats with my passions. This is what is roughest to me in life, yet I submit heartily, and the more willingly because I know that this is the safest road, the least liable to delusions, the shortest to acquire perfect purity of heart, great love to God, and great merits.

THIRD WEEK.

In the first meditation for the third week, namely, that on the Preparation for the Passion, in considering the ardent desire of Jesus Christ to suffer, my mind turned first to the desire which the Saints had to die, which desire made death seem to them unspeakably sweet. This is the result, I think, of inviolable fidelity in corresponding to all God's graces, and in doing for Him all the good that they were able to perform during many years. This thought kindled in me a strong wish not to lose time, and to do as soon as possible whatever good I am able to do, so as to be in a condition to desire death, and to welcome it joyfully. Then, I thought that a man who really wishes to suffer much for Jesus Christ is like a person in extreme hunger or thirst, who while waiting for something to satisfy him eagerly takes the small amount of food or drink which may happen to come within his reach. I feel a great wish to suffer for God, and I see no sorrow which I would not accept, I think, with much joy; but I esteem it a favour granted by God to His friends, and I find myself so unworthy of it that I do not think God will ever bestow it upon me.

In the meditation on the Taking of Jesus Christ, two things touched me greatly and occupied the whole time. The first is the disposition with which Jesus Christ went to meet those who were seeking Him, with the same firmness, courage, and outward composure as if His soul had been in a perfect calm.

His Heart is full of a terrible bitterness, all passions are let loose within Him, the whole nature is unstrung, and amidst all this disturbance and all these temptations the Heart goes straight to God, does not make one false step, does not hesitate to act as the highest virtue suggests. This is a miracle which the Spirit of God can alone perform in a heart, to harmonize war and peace, storm and calm, desolation, and a certain manly fervour which nothing can shake, neither nature nor the devils, nor God Himself, Who seems to be armed against us, or at least to abandon us.

The second thing is the disposition of that Heart towards Judas, who was betraying Him, the Apostles who forsook Him in so cowardly a manner, the Priests, and the other authors of the persecution He underwent. It is certain that all this could not excite in Him the slightest feeling of hatred or indignation, that it in no wise diminished His love for His disciples and for His persecutors, that He was sincerely and extremely grieved at the injury which they were doing to themselves, and that what He suffered, far from troubling Him, sweetened His sorrow to some extent, because He saw that His sufferings might be a remedy for the ills of His enemies. Therefore I represent to myself this Heart, devoid of all rancour or bitterness, filled with a true tenderness for His enemies, which no perfidy, no ill-treatment could rouse to hatred. Then addressing myself to Mary, to ask for grace to have the same disposition, I perceive a perfect resemblance in hers; she is plunged in grief but she does nothing unbecoming, she does not lose her judgment in this terrible conjuncture, she wishes the executioners of her Son no evil; on the contrary, she loves them and offers Him for them. This sight delights me, gives me unspeakable love for virtue, and affords me the greatest possible pleasure.

O Hearts truly worthy to possess all hearts, to reign over the hearts of all, of Angels and of men! You shall be henceforth my Rule, and upon similar occasions I will strive to have your feelings. I wish my heart to be henceforth only in that of Jesus and of Mary, or that of Jesus and of Mary to be in mine, that they may communicate to it their movements, and that

it may only be stirred according to the impression which it shall receive from theirs.

At the repetition—friend: Jesus did indeed love him, or He would not have called him His friend. Jesus Christ longed to convert him, He had chosen the arrow skilfully, and Judas must have been pierced to the heart; but he was like those hopelessly ill to whom the most powerful remedies are given. These produced their effect, but the sick person, not possessing strength to resist the operation, dies instead of being cured.

All is admirable: Jesus Christ led away, Jesus Christ before the judgment seat, accused and silent. I think that with God's grace I could endure being calumniated and treated as a rogue. I should find therein the complete annihilation of self-love. I think that upon such an occasion I should thank God with my whole heart and should entreat Him to let me die in that condition; however, it is waste of time to think of this, since it is not a favour for such as I am. One must be a Saint for this. I must endeavour to profit by the small opportunities which occur and beware lest, while entertaining these chimerical wishes, I should pursue vain worldly glory, and let slip these small opportunities.

In meditating upon St. Peter's Fall I understood with wonder and with fear how weak we are. This makes me shudder. I have in me the source and seed of every vice. There is not one which I am not capable of committing. It is only God's grace which prevents me from falling into the abyss of all disorders. How humbling this is! What shame this should cause even the holiest souls! Therefore St. Paul said: *In timore et tremore*, etc.—“In fear and trembling.”

Jesus Christ spent the whole of that night bound, a butt for the insolence of the soldiers. The thoughts of Jesus during the whole of this night are a beautiful subject for meditation. What more wonderful than to see Jesus Christ, incarnate wisdom, treated as a fool by Herod and all his court? The world has never changed its opinion of the Son of God. With it He still passes for a fool. What courage in Jesus Christ to have despised all the glory and all the respect which He might so easily have gained from this court, to have been willing to allow this king

and his officers to continue to consider Him a fool ! What a sacrifice to His Father ! How glorious this is ! How cowardly we are who value so highly the opinion of men, and render ourselves slaves to it ! When shall we shake off this shameful yoke ? When shall we rise superior to the world ? It is worthy of a Christian soul to endure shame which might be avoided, and to rest satisfied with having God alone for witness of a truth which is creditable to us. My God, I wish to become a Saint between Thee and me, and to despise any shame which shall not diminish the esteem which Thou mightest have for me. The sight of these generous actions, so superior to nature, seems to elevate my soul above itself and all created things.

What a sight it is to see Jesus Christ brought back to Pilate through Jerusalem clothed like a fool ! Pilate condemns Him to be scourged. What justice ! Jesus Christ does not complain, though He is aware that the reason of it is the jealousy of the priests and the false complaisance of the judge, and though He foresees the cruelty of the torture. I compared this with our behaviour when we are wronged in any way. How can we complain when we see such an example ? I was deeply ashamed at the recollection of the past. The opportunities which I have lost will never return, and of this I am unworthy. I have resolved never to complain of anything. I am persuaded that in whatever manner people treat me they cannot do me injustice.

Nothing touched me so deeply in the flagellation as the contempt shown to Jesus Christ therein. The vilest of men is pitied when condemned to be tortured ; stones are flung at an executioner if he causes a thief or a murderer to suffer too severely ; and behold Jesus Christ abandoned to the caprice of the soldiers, who tear Him, heap suffering upon suffering and illtreat Him with impunity, as if He were not a man. He makes no complaint, but abases Himself still more in the presence of His Father. He accepts all these sufferings from His hand, and is delighted to be able to render Him supreme honour by this terrible abasement. They place a crown of thorns upon His head ; this is to expiate the dreadful passion men have to be kings, to excel and to get the better of others in all things.

Pilate brings Him forth: *Ecce Homo*. He must have been in a piteous condition. This is for those who seek prominent positions and applause. They prefer Barabbas. This is strange. We complain of benefits done to others; Jesus Christ does not complain. He places Himself even lower than others did by the unjust comparison. In His heart He was saying all the time to His Father: *Ego vermis et non homo*—"I am a worm and no man." They cried out: *Crucifige*—"Crucify Him," and He consented with all His heart. Are there any Christians in the world like this pattern, this example? If, each time that we break a Rule out of human respect, we were to reflect that we prefer a man to God, I do not think we should often do so. This thought touched me, and I thought that in future I should be inflexible on this point. A man appeared to me so small a thing that I could not understand why we take so much trouble to please some men, when God is the witness of our actions. But alas! will not all these feelings fade away upon the first opportunity?

I am not greatly surprised at the injustice of Pilate in condemning Jesus Christ; but I was extremely touched at seeing Jesus Christ submit to this unjust sentence, take His Cross and bear it with admirable humility, gentleness, and resignation. Having reached the summit of the hill, He allows Himself to be stripped: He stretches Himself upon that Cross, holds out His hands and feet to be pierced, and offers Himself to His Father with feelings of which He only is capable. This sight makes the Cross so pleasing to me that I think I could not be happy without it. I have respect for those whom God visits by humiliations and adversities of any kind. They are doubtless His favourites. In order to humble myself I need only compare myself with them whilst I am in prosperity.

In considering Jesus Christ dying upon the Cross I found that the old man is still alive within me, and that unless God sustains me by His Grace I shall be as weak after thirty days of retreat and meditation as before. God will have to work a great miracle to make me die completely to self: *Adhuc vivit in me vetus homo, non est totus crucifixus, et non est perfecte moruus; bella movet intestina, hoc regnum animæ non patitur*

esse quietum—"The old man lives in me, he is not yet wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead. It yet raises war within and does not suffer the kingdom of my soul to enjoy perfect quiet." I have remarked that whenever God has given me this lively feeling of my worthlessness, and I have engaged in prayer after some fault or weakness which made me aware of my imperfections, I have been consoled towards the end of my prayer, and have come out of it much stronger. *Iratus es et misertus es mei, conversus est furor tuus, et consolatus es me*—"Thou art angry and hast had pity upon me, Thy anger is turned away, and Thou hast consoled me." This happens to me even when not praying, after having overcome the temptation by God's grace. This was the case in this meditation, and I came out of it with the new resolution to give no quarter to self-love, and to be on my guard against all its attacks. I earnestly implored this grace from Jesus Christ, laying bare before Him my wretchedness and weakness, which every day shows me to be greater.

At the Burial I saw how far I am from the state to which Jesus Christ reduced Himself in order to honour His Father and to serve me. I said with deep feeling: "My God, is it possible that so many sufferings, such deep abasement, and so cruel and shameful a death, have all been endured to appease Thy wrath against me, and to draw down Thy graces and blessings upon me, and I am still so imperfect? Eternal Father, has not enough been done to make me a Saint? Whence comes it that I do not experience in me a change much more in proportion to such labours? It is a large sum, but let me say to Thee that Thou seemest to have not yet given me the graces which correspond to this price. I expect great results from Thy Son's zeal, but I do not yet experience them to be such as I think I have cause to hope. Perhaps this is because I do not wish to experience these results. But, my God, if it were so, I should not offer Thee the death of Thy Son and the sacrifice of the Mass in order to feel them; we do not employ such powerful means as these when we have no wish to obtain anything." We must love as if we were already dead and buried: *Oblivioni datus sum tanquam mortuus a corde*—"I am given over to forgetfulness,

as one dead from the heart." For the future I must be, as far as possible, a man of whom no one thinks, who is no longer anything in the world, who is really nothing—such a one I hope really to be.

FOURTH WEEK.

At the Resurrection, what joy for those who had suffered with Jesus Christ, and been truly touched with His sorrows, like Mary, St. John, Magdalen, and the like; for, as to other men, they take as little part in this rejoicing as they did in the sad mysteries which preceded it. With what pleasure and profusion God rewards the sufferings and ignominy of His Son ! Not to speak of heaven, the seat of His great glory, on earth, for one Judas who sold Him, how many millions will give up everything in order to possess Him ? For one ungrateful, sacrilegious city which disowned Him for its King, how many kingdoms and empires will submit themselves to His power ? He was denied by St. Peter ; how many millions of Martyrs will suffer death rather than deny Him ? For the stool of shame, how many altars will He have ? For the mockery of the soldiers, how many true adorations ? For the purple mantle and the white robe, what riches will adorn His churches and His altars ?

In meditating upon the Impassibility of Jesus Christ, I examined what could yet touch me. I felt a great repugnance to obey upon a certain occasion. I have conquered this by God's grace, and I feel ready for anything. I reflected that it is dangerous to form plans even about things of slight importance, unless one is firmly resolved to quit them all in order to obey or to practise charity. If there be any occupation which one has difficulty in leaving, and which one prefers to retain rather than employ oneself otherwise, or even than to do nothing if God wills, there is a risk of our being humanly attached thereto. I have firmly resolved to be on my guard on this point. We must have this determination, with God's grace, to grant nature nothing. With God's help, before deciding upon anything concerning any proposition made to me, I must consult God and accustom myself to forestall the movements which

things occasion in my soul, by raising my mind to God, to see what opinion I ought to have of it according to the Rules of the Gospel. Without this care it is impossible to maintain peace of heart and not to fall into many mistakes, because everything has an aspect agreeable or disagreeable to nature, and that is not the manner in which they should be faced. In order not to do so there are no other means than this method of elevation to which all that I have noted down belongs. St. Ignatius's method of making an examen or deliberation at the beginning of each action, especially those in which there is the most danger of making mistakes, is incomparable. I have determined to use it. I cannot fail in time to produce greater purity and to maintain great peace of conscience. With God's grace it is not too difficult, and not more so than the examen which ought to follow that same action. When a person is very earnest about his perfection he does this naturally and most unconsciously. What a beautiful thing it is to be able to say: *Opus consummavi quod dedisti mihi ut facerem*—"I have completed the work which Thou gavest me to do." Jesus and Mary could say this when dying. I have observed that when I am determined to imitate Jesus Christ in this during my whole life, nature seems, as it were, surprised at the project, and I feel stronger to do it. To bring myself, for instance, to spend this month, this year, in doing all I can to render my actions agreeable to God and as perfect as possible, requires great diligence, observance of the Rules, and frequent examens joined with prayer to obtain numerous graces.

At the repetition of the Ascension I noticed that Jesus Christ, after suffering, dying, and rising again, leaves Jerusalem, ascends the mountain, and after so many trials, entirely detached from the world and from earth, rises easily to heaven. What prevents us from following Him is that we are still leading a worldly life, plunged in sin or engaged in intercourse with men, or attached to earth, where we still find our happiness. St. Paul says: *Conversatio nostra in cælis est*—"Our conversation is heaven." Happy are they who can say the same! For my part I ask God that I may live between heaven and earth, enjoying neither pleasures of the world, nor those of Paradise

in complete detachment, bound only to Him Who is everywhere to be found. It is for us to withdraw ourselves from all earthly pleasures, or at least to take no part in them with pleasure for our motive, to detach our hearts from them if we cannot actually renounce them. Let them be a trouble to us on account of the ardent desire we have to deprive ourselves of them out of love to God, and for the sake of the pleasures of heaven. We ought to leave all to God, Who knows our strength and Who has His own designs, and we should live in indifference, and be quite ready to do without them.

In the meditation upon the Love of God I was deeply touched at the thought of the blessings which I have received from God from the first moment of my life until now. What goodness, what care, what providence for body and soul, what patience and gentleness! I certainly have had no difficulty in giving myself completely to Him, or at least in wishing with my whole heart to be His; for I dare not yet flatter myself that I have thoroughly made this sacrifice. Experience alone can reassure me on this point. I do indeed think that I should be the most ungrateful and miserable of men were I to retain for myself anything whatever. I see that I must be His absolutely, and I could never consent to any division; still, I must see whether I have enough strength and constancy to carry this right feeling into practice. I am very weak, and unable to do this of myself. This truth I know: if I am faithful, my God, Thou wilt have all the glory and I know not how I could attribute anything to myself. I must entirely forget myself.

In the second meditation upon the Love of God I think God made me penetrate into and clearly see this truth: First, that He is in all creatures; secondly, that He is whatever is good in them; thirdly, that He Himself does for us whatever good we receive from them; and I seem to see this King of Glory and Majesty employed in warming us with our clothes, refreshing us with the air, nourishing us with food, making us rejoice in agreeable sounds and objects, and producing in us all the movements necessary in order to live and act. How wonderful! Who am I, O my God, that I should be thus served by Thee in everything, at all times, so assiduously, and with so much

care and love? He acts likewise in all other creatures, and it is all for me, like a zealous and watchful steward, who causes work to be done for his king in all parts of the kingdom. What is most admirable is, that God does this for all men, although hardly anyone thinks of it except some chosen and holy souls. I, at least, must think of this and be grateful. I think that, as God's glory is the last end of all His actions, He does all this chiefly for the love of those who remember it, who admire His goodness in so doing, who are grateful to Him, and who take occasion hence to love Him. Others receive the same benefits as if from chance, or through good fortune; just as when one person is entertained or serenaded, many persons enjoy the same pleasure because they are in the house with him for whom this is done. What God said to St. Teresa refers to this: that if He had not made the world He would create it out of love for her.

In the meditation, I reflected that the offices performed towards us by God through preachers produce in us great shame and great recollection. When we are waited on by a servant we often receive the service while attending to something else, such as conversing with another person or even sleeping; but if a person of rank were to lower himself so much as to wish to serve us, we should certainly keep awake. *Domine tu mihi lavas pedes?*—"Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" This is wonderful to anyone who has a little knowledge of Who God is and what we are.

God continually refers to us the existence, life, and actions of all that He has created in the universe. This is His occupation in nature. Ours ought to be always to receive what He sends us from all parts, and to return it to Him by acts of thanksgiving, praising Him and acknowledging that he is the Author of all things. I have promised God to do this as far as I am able. The exercise of the presence of God is of great utility, but it may be said that it is a very special gift of God to continue it with that sweetness without which it would become hurtful. I only ask of God His love and His grace and a love with more firmness in it than demonstrativeness or sweetness. I have promised with His grace not to begin any action without

remembering that He is the witness of it, that He performs it together with me and gives me the means to do it; never to conclude any without the same thought, offering it to Him as belonging to Him and in the course of the action; whenever the same thought shall occur, to stop for a moment and renew the desire of pleasing Him. Upon these words: *Amorem tui solum*, etc.—“Give me Thy love, and Thy grace, for they are sufficient for me,” I found myself ready to spend my whole life without any consolations, even spiritual ones, contented to serve God with great fidelity, in aridity, or even in temptations.

In order to receive as I ought what I see nature dreads, I should remember, if it comes to pass, that I asked it from God. It is a great sign that He loves me, and I have much cause to hope everything from His goodness. It is a consequence which will confirm me in the sweet thought that all that has happened hitherto has been by special providence. I promise to accept it as I do the most agreeable thing in the world without showing to anyone any natural inclinations.

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